

National Report Summary

ERO publishes evaluation reports on education issues of national importance. This handout is a summary of a recent national report - it captures the key points and highlights findings which you may find useful. The full report is available on our website - www.ero.govt.nz

Including students with high needs: primary schools (July 2013)

This is the Education Review Office (ERO)'s latest report about inclusive practice in schools. The report focuses on students with high needs in primary schools and the school-level changes made to support inclusion since ERO reported in 2010. This new evaluation builds on ERO's 2010 findings using information collected in Term 4, 2012.

For the purposes of this report, high needs students are those with significant physical, sensory, neurological, psychiatric, behavioural or intellectual impairment.

What we found

Overall, ERO found that 77 percent of schools were **mostly inclusive** – 27 percent more than that recorded in ERO's 2010 report. Sixteen percent had **some inclusive** practices and seven percent had **few inclusive** practices.

Mostly inclusive schools had made some school-level changes to support inclusion. These changes generally focussed on **professional learning and development**, as well as the review of **teacher aide strategies** and the school's **collaborative approaches** for high needs students.

Schools that were mostly inclusive were **warm** and **welcoming** to students with high needs. School leaders were committed to creating an **inclusive culture**, where students with high needs were valued members of the school community. Students had **well developed Individual Education Plans (IEPs)** with specific and achievable social, cultural and academic goals. School staff and outside personnel were well coordinated to provide appropriate support.

Areas for development

Despite changes, there were still areas for development. Robust and regular **self review** of inclusive practices is needed to help schools continuously improve outcomes for their high needs students. Self review could also sustain inclusive practices for future students.

Schools with some inclusive practices lacked the overall cohesion and coordination of the mostly inclusive schools. This led to 'pockets' of inclusion, rather than a school-wide inclusive culture.

To improve school-wide coordination, ERO recommended that schools review the effectiveness of their Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCO) role. Having an effective SENCO would, in many cases, raise these schools into the mostly inclusive category.

Example from a mostly inclusive school

The child's parent visited several schools for her older child who also has special needs. She chose this one because the school leaders were the most welcoming and open.

A meeting was set up with the parent, acting principal, SENCO, new entrant teacher and ECE teacher to discuss the child, what he is able to do, resources that would be needed and strategies to support his transition to school.

From this meeting the mother felt "uplifted" and trusted that her child would be safe. She is pleased with the progress he is making and feels well informed about his actual achievement levels and incremental progress. The new entrant teacher discusses these with her regularly and shares tracking sheets with her. His IEP shows progress and different goals being set between meetings.

What does it mean to be inclusive?

- Students learning needs are met within the mainstream classroom setting; withdrawal is only used for a specific educational purpose
- School leaders consistently demonstrate high ethical standards in striving to support the learning of students with high needs (this includes the principal, middle-management and, where applicable, SENCOs)
- A school-wide caring culture exists where students with high needs are integrated into a positive social environment, take part in the extra-curricular life of the school and achieve personal academic success
- A high level of teamwork and cooperation exists in support of students with high needs
- The school has a flexible and/or innovative approach to meeting student needs
- Teachers differentiate their teaching programme to engage students, including those with high needs
- Relevant changes have been made to buildings and equipment as indicated by the specific requirements of students with high needs
- High quality professional development is provided for teachers as well as for teacher aides
- There is a good level of communication and collaboration between the school, families, whānau and external professionals (i.e. RTLB, health professionals, Ministry of Education – Special Education, CYF)
- High quality Individual Education Plans (IEPs) are developed that can track developments in student achievement (academic achievement and, where applicable, behavioural and social achievements)
- The school has effective strategies in place to support the students' individual needs, including their language, culture and identity. These strategies also take into account the high quality goals developed within IEPs
- The school manages entry and exit transitions so that students can successfully be included (and achieve)
- Evidence and feedback about the school's inclusiveness is analysed to support improvements

Inclusive Practices Tools

In Term 3, 2013 The New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) will release a comprehensive set of **Inclusive Practices Tools** on the Wellbeing@School website to support schools. Information about NZCER's forthcoming Inclusive Practices Tools and a prototype launch can be found on the Wellbeing@School website:

www.wellbeingatschool.org.nz/about-inclusive-practices-tools

FIND OUT MORE

For more ideas and information, you can read the full report online at www.ero.govt.nz/national-reports

Ko te Tamaiti te Pūtake o te Kaupapa
The Child – the Heart of the Matter