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**Report to NZEI Annual Meeting 2007**



**NZEI** - TE RĪU ROA

**Annual Meeting**  
2007

Quality Public Education - Learning for All  
Whakaakoranga Tūmatanui Kōunga  
Akoranga mo te Katoa

# Special Education Policy Review: A Framework for Consultation

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REPORT TO ANNUAL MEETING 2007

# SPECIAL EDUCATION POLICY REVIEW: A FRAMEWORK FOR CONSULTATION

## BACKGROUND

In 2006 NZEI convened a working group to consider implications for NZEI special education policy of the Ministry of Education's EEPiSE<sup>1</sup> project.

The working group reported back on EEPiSE themes, messages and trends, and the current political and legislative landscape. The group considered NZEI policy over the last 10 to 15 years, brainstormed a 'Blue Skies' vision for special education and prepared a report for NZEI's National Executive.

The group agreed there were four areas to explore in furthering the development of a NZEI policy framework. These were:

- defining special education;
- resourcing special education;
- "Best Practice" teaching and learning in special education; and
- a collaborative and co-ordinated approach to support members, centres, schools and parents.

In November 2006 National Executive received the group's report and agreed that action be taken to:

- continue to update and refocus NZEI Special Education Policy; and
- complete the special education policy document following consultation with members and debate at Annual Meeting 2007.

## CONTEXTS

### Membership Driven

NZEI's 45,000 members work across the early childhood education and compulsory schooling sectors in a range of occupations and worksites. NZEI policy developed from this membership base would reflect the aspirations of the wider membership. This would be the basis for all professional or industrial advocacy on behalf of all members and the sectors in which they work.

### Framed by a commitment to Quality Public Education

In 2006 Annual Meeting endorsed the position paper *QPE 4 21C: Quality Public Education for the 21st Century* to provide a medium term strategic direction for the NZEI Te Riu Roa work programme. NZEI's special education policy should be developed within the principles of *QPE 4 21C*.

### Based on Research and Best Evidence

Policy, based on research and best evidence, provides a strategic focus for ongoing work programmes. It should provide the framework for future actions.

For the purposes of this report, special education does not include:

- gifted and talented children; or
- children with disruptive behaviours (this is the subject of another Annual Meeting report). *Note:* While children with special education needs may have disruptive behaviour, children with disruptive behaviour do not necessarily have special education needs.

## PROCESS

This Annual Meeting report continues the discussion and invites feedback from all parts of NZEI Te Riu Roa membership.

Members, branches, district councils or networks wishing to respond should complete the attached feedback form by **16 November**

Following Annual Meeting 2007 membership feedback will be encapsulated in an overarching policy statement.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

That the report *Special Education Policy Review: A Framework for Consultation* be received.

That a report on NZEI Te Riu Roa special education policy be presented to Annual Meeting 2008.

<sup>1</sup> The EEPiSE (Enhancing Effective Practice in Special Education) project included action research and action learning, and culminated in school led symposia in June 2006. The symposia and the experiences of the schools participating in the project provided a useful starting point for revisiting NZEI special education policy.

## WHAT IS SPECIAL ABOUT SPECIAL EDUCATION?

“Education is at the heart of everything NZEI values in society” (NZEI Te Riu Roa, 2006).

Public education systems must be founded on the principle of education as a human right and a public good. Public education systems should uphold a fundamental set of values in which education plays a crucial role in creating a better society, particularly in a globalised world.

NZEI advocates the provision of free quality publicly owned and provided education which embraces social justice and in which the rights and responsibilities of those who deliver that system are upheld. This is at the heart of what NZEI members do. *QPE421C* Principle 1 (NZEI Te Riu Roa, 2006, p. 4).

NZEI’s special education policy statement will be framed by:

- New Zealand legislation that states that those who have “special educational needs (whether because of disability or otherwise) have the same rights to enrol and receive education at state schools as people who do not.” (Education Act 1989, s. 8).
- School Boards of Trustees’ responsibilities to identify and appropriately support students and groups of students who have special educational needs on the basis of good quality assessment information. Ministry of Education NEG 7, NAG 1 (3) (c).
- *The Quality Teaching for Diverse Students in Schooling: Best Evidence Synthesis*. (Ministry of Education, 2003)
- Growing international awareness and acceptance of the rights of children with disabilities and in particular their right to education.
- The development of inclusive practice and effective inclusive schools and centres.

Q1: How does/could a concept of “Learning for All” apply effectively in your school or centre?

Q2: Do you know of schools and centres that operate “inclusively”? What distinguishes these schools and centres from others?

Q3: How would you decide which children and young people have special education needs?

## RESOURCING SPECIAL EDUCATION

It is not enough to say that education is a human right. The education provided must be underpinned by a unified education service that promotes social justice. Such a service must be of a high quality, well-resourced and engaged with its community. *QPE421C* Principle 2 (NZEI Te Riu Roa, 2006, p. 6).

Special education is the provision of extra help, adapted programmes, learning environments, or specialised equipment or materials to support children and young people with their learning and help them participate in education. (Ministry of Education, 2006).

NZEI policy should set clear expectations about what resourcing should achieve and how resourcing could be used to be effective, efficient and equitable.

It will be insufficient to simply state that there is not enough.

- All children and young people whether they have special education needs or not, are resourced to attend their local school or centre.
- Additional special education resourcing includes staffing and funding to support children and young people individually and in groups.
- Resourcing in its widest application includes developing programmes, providing equipment, modifying property and professional development.
- In the compulsory sector resourcing is held in schools or clusters, and by the Ministry.
- In the early childhood education sector children are supported by their centres, by the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, and in some places by a variety of accredited service providers.

Q4: What are the most effective and efficient ways your school or centre uses special education resourcing to ensure all children participate in education?

Q5: When children and young people are well supported what does this look like?

Q6: What characterises equitable resourcing?

## BEST PRACTICE TEACHING AND LEARNING IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

NZEI recognises the importance of child-centred learning, which takes into account the context and the need to differentiate teaching according to need. *QPE421C* (NZEI Te Riu Roa, 2006 p. 9).

What we do for all doesn't work for some but what we do for some supports all. (Barbara Disley as cited by Florian, 2006, p. 24).

The concept of 'diversity' is central to the synthesis. This frame 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. (Ministry of Education, 2003, p. v).

Students with disabilities bring educators a challenge to make our teaching practices more inclusive. Meeting the challenge invariably improves the way we teach the broader range of students who don't have disabilities. (Giangreco, 2007, p. 37).

Effective teachers care about students and student achievement. Their teaching begins with the belief that all students can learn and achieve, and that teachers can make a difference for all students. Effective teachers build affirming learning relationships with students, fostering students' well-being and their love of learning. (Ministry of Education, 2005, p.19)

Q7. In what ways do you or your school and centre ensure effective teaching and learning in special education?

Q8. In what ways do you engage children and young people with special education needs in learning in a meaningful way?

Q9. How is best special education practice disseminated amongst your colleagues, cluster etc?

Q10. What would make a difference for teachers, specialists and support staff in their day to day interactions with children and young people with special education needs?

Q.11 What are the barriers to the effective teaching and learning of children and young people with special education needs?

Q.12 How could these barriers be reduced?

## A COLLABORATIVE AND CO-ORDINATED APPROACH

"There is too much reinvention of the wheel required in individual schools, for people already working at full stretch." (Wylie, 2000, p. 7).

NZEI continues to advocate that special education provision will work best for children and young people with special education needs when:

- there are close and collaborative relationships between schools, clusters and centres;
- where consultative and constructive relationships are built between parents, staff, schools, centres and the Ministry;
- programmes are well supported, resourced and meet the needs of individual children; and
- appropriate levels of achievement are identified.

Q.13 How could NZEI members benefit most by:

-collaboration across and through the sectors?

-co-ordination of services and resources?

Q.14. How could children and young people with special education needs benefit most by:

-collaboration across and through the sectors?

-co-ordination of services and resources?

Q.15. How could a collaborative and co-ordinated approach to special education provision be best achieved for children and young people in your area?

## REFERENCE LIST

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