

Learning Support Coordinator

A Guide to the Role

Kairuruku Tautoko Akoranga

He Aratohu mō te Tūranga



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
TE TĀHUHU O TE MĀTAURANGA

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The examples of the LSC role in action in this resource illustrate particular points and contexts. They do not refer to real educators.

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Tūngia te ururua kia tupu whakaritorito te tupu o te harakeke.

Clear away the overgrowing bush so that the new flax shoots will spring up.

Remove barriers to learning, engagement, and wellbeing so that our mokopuna will flourish.



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About this resource

Mō tēnei rauemi

Although this resource is for learning support coordinators (LSCs), it will also be useful for those who work alongside them, including school, kura, and cluster leaders and SENCOs.

The purpose of the resource is to provide guidance to you, the LSC, so you are clear and confident about the intention of the role and its key components. It will help you to shape your role and plan and prioritise activities in keeping with its intended core functions and responsibilities.

This guide unpacks your responsibilities in relation to those you will support and work alongside, including:

- learners (including children in early learning settings requiring transition support)
- whānau¹
- teachers
- school and kura leadership teams
- other LSCs across the cluster, Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour (RTLBs), Ministry of Education staff, and other agencies and services.

How to use this resource

This resource contains a detailed description of the LSC role, examples of it in action in diverse contexts, and links to information and resources that will support you to strengthen the knowledge and skills needed for the role. Targeted, online support materials and tools will accompany the resource. Additional materials will be added over time in response to the professional learning needs of LSCs.

You can use this guide to clarify the key responsibilities and relationships that will shape your role, and to identify and prioritise the activities that will make up your day-to-day work. You can also use it to identify areas where you may need to seek further information.

The suggested links throughout the resource will help you locate current, relevant learning support information, tools, and strategies. The appendices provide brief definitions of some of the key terms, services, and agencies commonly used in learning support, with links to more in-depth information. To activate these links, the online version of the resource is available at <https://conversation.education.govt.nz/conversations/learning-support-action-plan/learning-support-coordinators/>.

¹ Note that throughout this resource, 'whānau' is used in place of the full expression 'parents, families, caregivers, and whānau'.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Te Tiriti is the foundation for a partnership that is inclusive of all children, young people, and their whānau. Treaty-based, culturally sustaining practice supports the holistic wellbeing of all children, young people, and their whānau.

The Treaty's principles of partnership, participation, and protection should guide all aspects of learning support, including the work of the learning support coordinator. They are essential to effective learning support for Māori tamariki and rangatahi. As LSC, you can help teachers and school and kura leaders across your cluster to enact these principles by promoting inclusive environments that are welcoming for ākonga with learning support needs and their whānau.

- Through strong *partnerships*, educators and whānau share their expertise and plan and work together to ensure that barriers to education success are addressed.
- When whānau are welcomed as active *participants* in the co-construction of inclusive, culturally sustaining support, the identity, language, and culture of Māori tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau are valued and promoted.
- When the wellbeing and cultural identity of Māori tamariki are authentically supported and strengthened, the principle of *protection* is enacted.

Giving practical effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi is one of five guiding principles for [Ka Hikitia](#), the cross-agency Māori Education strategy for the education sector. At the heart of the strategy is Māori enjoying and achieving educational success as Māori, as they develop the skills to participate in te ao Māori, Aotearoa, and the wider world.



Purpose and intent of the LSC role

The LSC role is a fully-funded role working in a school or kura and across its cluster, without management responsibilities. The role does not replace any other learning support roles such as SENCOs that are already in place.

The purpose of the LSC role is to make sure that children and young people with mild-to-moderate, neurodiverse, or high-and-complex learning support needs receive appropriate help when they need it. The role has been established in response to consistent requests over many years for a dedicated, funded, full-time learning support role in schools.

As an LSC, you will bring your skills, knowledge, caring, and values to the role, along with your ability to work collaboratively to achieve positive outcomes for the one in five children and young people who need some kind of extra support for their learning. You will help identify, understand, and plan for the needs of these learners in your local community. You will coordinate services and support, ensuring that there are robust, carefully monitored, and appropriately resourced plans in place for learners who need extra support.

You will also be a key contact for whānau of children and young people with learning support needs, helping them to partner successfully with their school. You will simplify access and minimise barriers to services and resources.

At classroom-, school- or kura-, and cluster-wide levels, you will support and promote inclusive values and practices. You will work with leaders to design and implement systems and processes that help all children and young people learn, make progress, and transition successfully between settings. You will collaborate with the Ministry's facilitation function and Resource Teachers to access services and resources, aiming for a seamless approach to providing learning support across the cluster. You will also ensure that other appropriate individuals and services are involved – for example, significant individuals identified by whānau or people from hapū, iwi, or an NGO.

The role of an LSC will differ in different contexts. It is part of a fundamental change to how children and young people are supported. It provides a unique opportunity to be innovative, try new approaches, and collaborate to find solutions. It helps schools to keep the learner at the centre and to ask, "What support is needed, and who is best placed to deliver it?"

Although the LSC role is not a teaching role, the LSC needs to be an experienced, registered teacher. You can draw on this experience to promote the inclusive intent of *Te Whāriki*, *The New Zealand Curriculum*, and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* and to support your teaching colleagues to apply inclusive strategies effectively.



EXAMPLE: The LSC role in action

Hana is in year 3 and has autism. She is supported by an RTLB and a Ministry of Education speech language therapist (SLT). A kaitakawaenga from the Ministry helps whānau to engage with these services.

Anahera is the LSC at Hana's kura and is helping kaiako to apply the [principles](#) of Universal Design for Learning. These principles align well with the values of manaakitanga, kotahitanga, and whanaungatanga that underpin the inclusive systems and practices at the kura.

Anahera has helped kaiako and kaiāwhina to ensure that Hana can manage successfully in a busy, open-plan learning environment. They have used furniture to create a calming space that Hana can use for a cognitive and sensory rest when needed.

Anahera checks in regularly with Hana's kaiako to ensure that he can confidently follow the plan that has been developed collaboratively with the RTLB, SLT, and Hana and her whānau. Anahera also meets with the kaitakawaenga and Hana's whānau to ensure that a strong partnership is in place and that the whānau feel supported and welcome to contribute to planning and decision making.

What is learning support?

He aha te tautoko akoranga?

Learning support is a broad concept. It encompasses the range of practices, systems, supports, and services that help children and young people with diverse strengths and needs to experience success in their learning and relationships. These are underpinned by the inclusive values that ensure that education settings are welcoming places for all learners and their whānau.

Around one in five children and young people will need learning support at some time during their years at school. This might be because of disability, learning difficulties, disadvantage, physical or mental health, or behaviour issues. It includes support for children and young people with mild-to-moderate needs – for example, neurodiverse learners and learners who are gifted or at risk of disengaging from education.

Children and young people with learning support needs are part of the natural diversity of every learning environment. Some learners require support throughout their education, while others may need short-term support – for example, at transition points. The most effective support will be flexible and responsive.

Having an identified need for extra support is only one part of a child or young person's unique self. It is not the whole picture. A holistic, strengths-based approach ensures that the identification of learning support needs doesn't become a barrier to teachers and peers getting to know the learner as a person and appreciating their contribution to the life and culture of the learning community.

There are many contributors to effective learning support in education settings. School or kura leaders, teachers and kaiako, and teacher aides and kaiāwhina provide learning support through inclusive, school- or cluster-wide systems and practices, as well as through targeted support for those who need it. For those with more significant needs, education settings draw on external services such as those provided by Ministry of Education Learning Support, Resource Teachers, community organisations, and other health and social services, including specialist support networks.

Learning support is most effective when it is:

- provided at the right time
- part of an early intervention approach
- tailored to the strengths, needs, and aspirations of learners
- planned and monitored with the learner and their whānau at the centre
- coherently linked when more than one support or service is required
- supported by local expertise and resources
- underpinned by inclusive values and practices
- responsive to the identities, languages, and cultures of learners
- based on evidence of what works best
- tailored to the child or young person's learning and social context.

Inclusive education

Inclusive education means that barriers to each student's learning are identified, and resources and support are in place to overcome any barriers. Inclusive values such as equity, participation, community, compassion, respect for diversity, and entitlement to education are a vital foundation in inclusive schools.

[Learning Better Together](#), Jude MacArthur, 2009, page 6

Children and young people in New Zealand want to live in a country where culture and diversity are not just accepted but embraced and celebrated. Inclusive practice forms the big picture of learning support. As LSC, your main priority is to ensure that a child or young person with learning support needs has every chance of success in their learning and relationships within the school or kura environment. To achieve this goal, the LSC works with others to strengthen the implementation of inclusive values.

Inclusive practices look, sound, and feel like the following:

- All learners engage in age-appropriate activities with their peers.
- The classroom climate is inclusive, positive, and celebrates difference.
- Learners interact and collaborate in respectful, positive ways.
- Teachers express high expectations of all learners.
- Learners actively participate in curriculum decision making.
- Inclusive language acknowledges diverse perspectives and different ways of behaving, feeling, being, and knowing.
- Teachers and leaders use literature and other resources to explore difference and promote belonging and an anti-bullying culture.
- Whānau of children or young people with learning support needs feel welcome, their expertise and perspectives are valued, and they are partners in planning and decision making.

Inclusive practices are promoted throughout *The New Zealand Curriculum*, *Te Whāriki*, and *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* and are central to the values that underpin the [professional code and standards for New Zealand teachers](#). From a te ao Māori perspective, tamariki are viewed holistically as taonga nested in their whānau.

As LSC, you have a key role in contributing to an environment where learners:

- are accepted, respected, and valued
- experience manaakitanga: kindness, respect, and care for others
- are free from racism and discrimination
- experience stable and healthy relationships
- are connected to their culture, language, beliefs, and identity, including whakapapa and tūrangawaewae.

The Learning Support Delivery Model

As learning support coordinator, you will work within the Learning Support Delivery Model (LSDM), which provides the infrastructure and network of support for you to undertake your role in schools and kura.

The LSDM organises learning support around what best meets the needs of all learners within their local community. It is a way of working with more local control to deliver tailored responses for children, young people, and their whānau.

As the following diagram shows, the LSDM involves the Ministry of Education's facilitation function, usually carried out by a service manager, helping schools and kura to access support from the Ministry, other service providers, community organisations, and other agencies. It brings together early learning services (including kōhanga reo), schools, kura, government agencies, and service providers to identify and respond

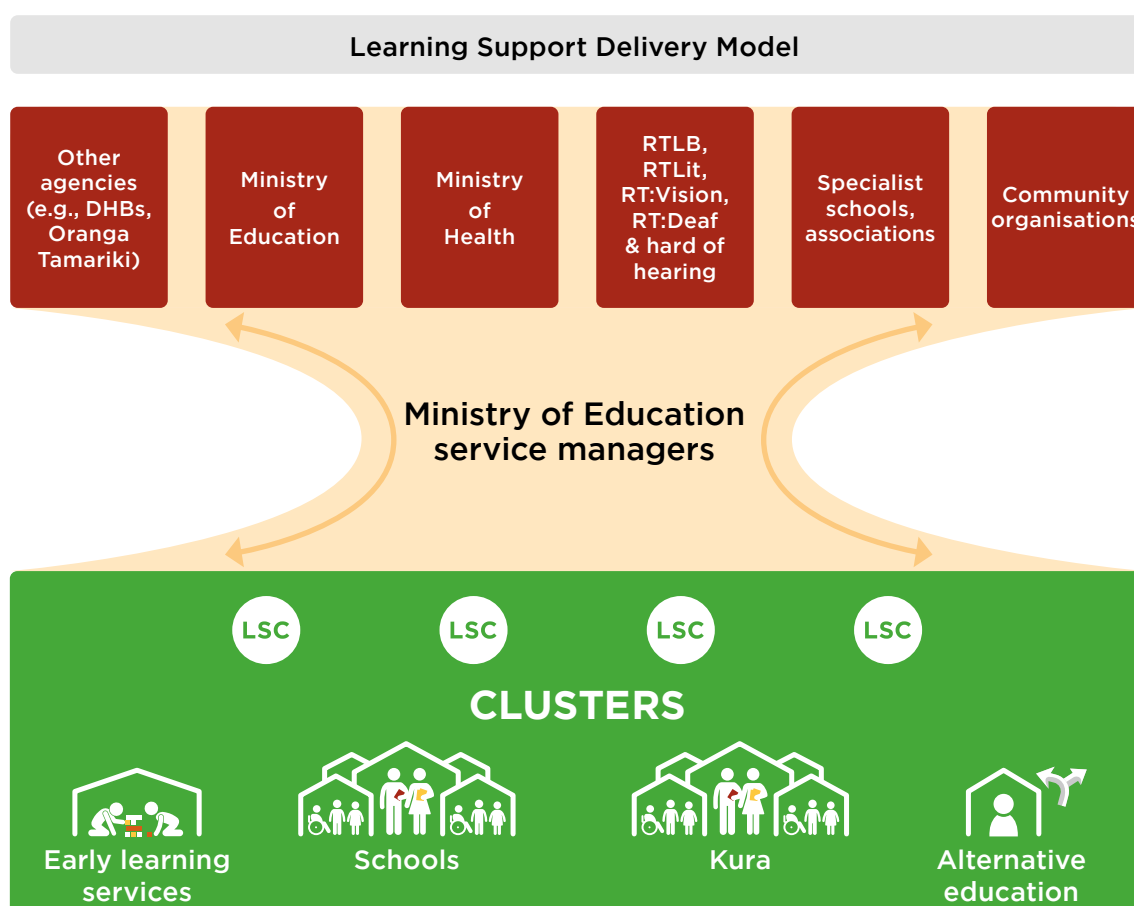
to the learning support needs of the children and young people in their area. Alternative education providers², sensory schools, regional health schools, teen parent units, and activity centres are all part of the model, helping ensure children and young people get the support they need to safeguard and promote their wellbeing and to be present, participate, and progress in their learning.

The LSDM has collaboration and flexibility at its heart. By collaborating, local communities have greater flexibility and can identify and receive appropriate support more quickly than they might by 'referring out' and waiting. This approach ensures that supports and services work in complementary, joined-up ways. This reduces the likelihood of gaps and overlaps and strengthens coherence and continuity.

The LSDM supports an inquiry approach that includes noticing, making sense, taking action, reviewing, evaluating, and making changes as needed. This inquiry approach provides a platform for informed decision-making and planning to support the wide range of needs that are typical in any education community. The LSDM needs all those in the learning support workforce to come together, share information and resources, and work together to decide how to respond to need and who is best placed to provide support (whether school- or cluster-wide, targeted, or individualised).

The four key features of the LSDM are:

- working together to plan and deliver joined-up support
- proactively identifying local needs and gathering available resources
- collaborative decision making
- strengthening support across a range of needs.



² Students participating in alternative education have been included in the rolls of schools that are part of a cluster with one or more LSCs. The LSDM encourages innovation and sharing of resources across the cluster to best meet the needs of all students with learning support needs, including those in alternative education or at risk of disengaging from education.

The Learning Support Delivery Model in action

Since 2017, the LSDM has been successfully piloted in a number of regions in New Zealand. In the Bay of Plenty, a pilot involving three Kāhui Ako resulted in an increased level of cooperation between schools, early learning services, and other support agencies, allowing their provision of learning support to be more proactive and flexible.

For example, the Otumoetai Kāhui Ako combined their learning support registers, enabling them to identify trends and learning support needs across their community. They discovered a very high need for support around anxiety. To help meet this need, the Ministry of Education and the Kāhui Ako approached their local District Health Board for support through Mental Health Services. As a result, two half-time support workers were provided to work across the Kāhui Ako, delivering programmes and coping strategies to children with anxiety and helping to build adults' and teachers' capability in this area.

The Puketeraki Kāhui Ako in North Canterbury includes 17 mainly rural schools and early learning services. The LSDM has helped them to work more closely together and to access support from other agencies. The RTLB cluster manager for the Kāhui Ako said, "When we think about the children who have challenges across our cluster, we put the child and family at the centre and think about the right people to have around the table ... It might be an RTLB, a Ministry of Education psychologist, and a speech language therapist. We then have flexibility to come and go as we need ... There's this real sense that we are in this together."

The Learning Support Action Plan 2019–2025

The [Learning Support Action Plan 2019–2025](#) sets out key priorities for improving the scope and effectiveness of learning support. It builds on the Learning Support Delivery Model.

The action plan prioritises the early identification of learning support needs, so that learners get the help they need as quickly as possible. There is also an emphasis on improving transitions across education settings and into life beyond compulsory education.

The six priorities are:

1. Implementation of a new learning support coordinator role in schools and kura
2. Strengthening screening and the early identification of learning support needs
3. Strengthening early intervention
4. Flexible supports and services for neurodiverse children and young people
5. Meeting the learning needs of gifted children and young people
6. Improving education for children and young people at risk of disengaging.

For more information, see [Strengthening Learning Support](#) on the Ministry's website.

Working with the Ministry of Education

The Ministry of Education is responsible for carrying out the Government's work programme for education, including the Learning Support Action Plan and other reforms and strategies. The Ministry's role is to ensure that the education system is working well for all children and young people and their whānau.

The Ministry is also a significant provider of learning supports and services. It employs a range of specialists who provide support to children, young people, and their whānau. As well as offering some individualised support, these specialists help to build capability and understanding among those who are supporting learners.

The LSC is not a provider of specialist support to teachers and learners – this is the role of Resource Teachers and other specialists. In your role as LSC, you will therefore need a close working relationship with your Ministry of Education and Resource Teacher colleagues. They are there to support you and the other LSCs across your cluster.

In particular, your relationship with the Ministry's facilitation function will be key. This function is likely to be led by a service manager in your local Ministry office. Facilitation will help arrange access to supports

and services to address need at an individual, group, or school- or cluster-wide level. Ministry staff members carrying out this function will help to bring the right people together to plan how to use supports and resources collaboratively, flexibly, and responsively to meet local needs.



EXAMPLE: The LSC role in action

Seven LSCs working across a cluster of 10 schools meet regularly to share and discuss data. Marama, the local Ministry service manager who provides the facilitator function, and Lima, the RTLB cluster manager, join them for these discussions. They all bring data to contribute to the big picture of need across the community.

At one meeting, the group notices an increase in requests for support for children's communication needs, particularly from primary schools in the cluster. The LSCs from those schools explain that one reason for the increase is a higher-than-usual number of beginning teachers in their schools' junior syndicates. The group notes that many of the requests for support relate to children's speech production. However, Marama feeds back that analysis of the requests suggests that the main area of concern is children's phonological awareness.

The group agrees that this concern does not warrant individual interventions and can be addressed through quality literacy teaching. They agree to plan a series of workshops that will be co-delivered by the Ministry and RTLB service. The workshops will support an inquiry approach in which teachers trial and evaluate strategies that support the development of phonological awareness, linked to speech production. Local ECE providers will be included in invitations to the workshops. In addition, the kōhanga reo and kura in the cluster will partner with the Ministry and the RTLB service on an approach that works for their community and the needs of their ākonga, whānau, and kaiako.



The role of the learning support coordinator

Te tūranga o te kairuruku tautoko akoranga

Schools and kura work hard to make sure that learners' needs are met through the combined efforts of learning support teams. These teams can include SENCOs, gifted coordinators, ESOL coordinators, pastoral care staff, school and kura leaders, specialist teachers, within- and across-school teachers, teacher aides/kaiāwhina, and social workers in schools (SWIS). The LSC role strengthens the team by providing a dedicated, full-time person who is fully focused on identifying and understanding need and coordinating the provision of support across a cluster.

Clarity about the LSC role is essential for its success, which is why there is a standard role description. The context of the role will impact on how it is carried out. In every case, it will be important to keep in mind that the intention of the role is to ensure that your work alongside existing roles is effective and complementary. Regardless of the context and who's involved, everyone in a learning support team should aim to provide high-quality, inclusive, culturally sustaining support for the children and young people who need it.



The context for an LSC will vary greatly. For example, within a cluster you may work:

- alongside two or three LSCs in a large secondary school
- as a single LSC in a school without a SENCO
- across two to five small schools, some with and some without a SENCO
- across schools, kura, and mixed-medium settings such as schools with bilingual classes
- as part of a large learning support team that includes a SENCO, a gifted coordinator, a specialist ESOL teacher, deans with pastoral responsibilities, and two counsellors.

Whatever the context, it will be important to agree with your school or kura leaders how you will carry out your role as LSC, based on the role description. In addition, leaders at cluster level will need to decide how all LSCs will contribute to a community-wide, collaborative approach. This will help ensure that role overlaps are addressed and potential gaps are identified and filled by the most appropriate person.

As a new LSC, like any new staff member, you will need time to grow into the position, build relationships, and acquire skills and knowledge through induction and ongoing professional learning.

The example below shows how LSCs can work together as well as with other key groups and support agencies across a cluster of schools. It also illustrates how learning support responsibilities could be distributed in a large secondary school. Note that it shows only one of many possible arrangements.



EXAMPLE: The LSC role in action

Tawhai and Rebecca are LSCs in a cluster that includes a large, urban secondary school and seven primary schools. They work in the secondary school, which has a full-time SENCO, a gifted coordinator, and an active pastoral support team. Five of the primary schools have SENCOs.

The LSCs and SENCOs in the cluster and the local Ministry service manager have agreed to meet together regularly. As a learning support community they want to plan how they will work together and identify opportunities for mutual support and the sharing of ideas, resources, and facilities.

In the secondary school, the deputy principal has responsibility for bringing together the learning support and pastoral teams regularly to discuss their current priorities and share examples of successful practice. These discussions are intended to clarify roles and address any gaps or overlaps in learning support across the school.

The school leadership team, in consultation with those providing learning and pastoral support, have agreed on how to distribute core tasks and responsibilities. They will review the effectiveness of their approach after two terms, redistributing some responsibilities if necessary.

Tawhai and Rebecca will work alongside classroom teachers and other support staff in the development and review of individual education plans (IEPs) for students. They will also work closely with their Ministry service manager and with Resource Teachers to coordinate access to supports and services.

The following table provides an example of how responsibilities might be assigned across the roles. Other responsibilities include ongoing relationship building, networking, and contributing to learning support system improvements at school level and across the cluster.



EXAMPLE: The LSC role in action (continued)

Tawhai (LSC 1)	<p>Acts as a key contact for teachers and whānau in years 9 and 10</p> <p>Coordinates PLD for staff on learning support (in collaboration with Rebecca)</p> <p>Makes requests for support</p> <p>Visits feeder schools and supports transitions into school (and between years 9 and 10) for students with identified needs</p> <p>Supports information gathering, assessments, and screening (e.g., for dyslexia)</p> <p>Supports development and review of individual education plans (IEPs) with classroom teachers and other support staff</p> <p>Maintains learning support register for years 9 and 10</p> <p>Analyses data, including student, whānau, and teacher voice, to identify learning support needs</p> <p>Analyses cluster-level data for sharing with leadership team (in collaboration with LSCs across cluster)</p>
Rebecca (LSC 2)	<p>Acts as a key contact for teachers and whānau in years 11–13</p> <p>Coordinates PLD for staff on learning support (in collaboration with Tawhai)</p> <p>Makes requests for support</p> <p>Supports transitions and pathways across years and beyond school</p> <p>Supports development and review of IEPs with classroom teachers and other support staff</p> <p>Maintains learning support register for years 11–13</p> <p>Acts as key contact for services from Resource Teachers, the Ministry, and other agencies</p> <p>Analyses data, including student, whānau, and teacher voice, to identify learning support needs</p> <p>Analyses cluster-level data to be shared with leadership team (in collaboration with LSCs across cluster)</p>
Existing SENCO	<p>Provides direct support to individual students</p> <p>Supports inclusive teaching strategies and classroom accommodations</p> <p>Has oversight of ORS students</p> <p>Coordinates assistive technologies</p> <p>Coordinates ESOL</p> <p>Coordinates applications for Special Assessment Conditions</p>
Gifted coordinator	<p>Coordinates programmes and resources for gifted students</p>
Pastoral team/ year-level deans Guidance counsellor	<p>Monitors attendance and engagement</p> <p>Accesses mental health support for students</p> <p>Maintains links with attendance service, community police, youth officer, and Oranga Tamariki site manager</p>

The remainder of this section describes the key groups that you will work with and support – this encompasses the main functions of the LSC role.

Supporting learners

Identifying need and planning for diversity

Priority 2 of the *Learning Support Action Plan 2019–2025* focuses on the identification of learning support needs. As LSC, you will help to ensure that your school has effective processes for identifying and responding to needs – mild-to-moderate, neurodiverse, and high-and-complex – and that these processes are used in timely ways. As part of a wider LSC network, you will help to analyse data to better understand need at school and cluster levels and support responses at each of them.

As LSC, you cannot be an expert in all areas where learning support is required. You are not responsible for diagnosing children. However, along with others, you will identify needs for support, differentiation, and adaptation, and help to put a planned response in place.

The most important sources of information about the need for learning support are the learner and their whānau. As LSC, you will encourage whānau to share their knowledge of their child and provide feedback to the school or kura about what they feel is working well, or not working well.

In addition to teachers, assessments from services such as health and social agencies can also inform the identification of need within a school or kura.



Neurodiversity

Priority 4 within the *Learning Support Action Plan 2019–2025* is to strengthen support for neurodiverse children and young people. Neurodiversity is a term that describes the different ways that people think, learn, communicate, relate to others, and respond to their environment.³

Neurodiversity is an expected aspect of human variability and describes a wide continuum of preference and difference. As LSC, you will ensure that the right supports and plans are in place for neurodiverse learners, underpinned by inclusive values and school- or cluster-wide practices that benefit everyone.

Neurodiversity includes children identified as gifted and those with needs arising from other differences in thinking, processing, and responding to the sensory and relational environment. An understanding of neurodiversity and a belief in the potential of all children and young people help teachers and school and kura leaders to create environments that are welcoming, responsive, and supportive for everyone.

► ³ The term can be used to describe learners with strengths and challenges attributable to (but not limited to) dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, autism spectrum disorder, foetal alcohol spectrum disorder, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, trauma-related disorders, and auditory or visual processing disorders.



The Learning Support Delivery Model in action

The Tokomairiro Kāhui Ako in Milton, Otago, consists of five early learning services, four primary schools, and one secondary school. Their focus is on a learning support group that brings together in-school and across-school teachers, principals, an RTLB, a public health nurse, and a Ministry of Education Learning Support service manager.

This collaborative model has helped the Kāhui Ako identify the diverse range of learning support needs across the community. A primary school principal said, “Three to four years ago, we hadn’t collated our data around needs and were just looking inwards.”

Since then, the Kāhui Ako has begun to collect both information about individual children and anonymous aggregate data that reveals learning and behaviour trends across the community. This data can also be used to identify needs for professional learning and development. For example, when it was found that teachers needed more strategies for managing challenging behaviour, the Ministry organised a series of workshops that involved more than twenty teachers ranging from early childhood to secondary.



Using a learning support register

As LSC, you will be responsible for maintaining a register of children and young people with learning support needs. The register will provide a record of the needs, support plans, resource allocation, and services for each learner.

Learning support registers will help you understand and respond to the learning support needs of your learners:

- individually – by recording information on each learner’s needs
- at a school level – by providing information on the numbers of students with different types of needs for use in planning and capability building
- at a cluster level – by enabling you to work collectively to identify, prioritise, and respond to where support is most needed.

At a system level, the registers will lead to a better understanding of learning support needs and inform future investment and the allocation of resources to support the learning of children and young people.

When developing your cluster-level register, use the [common language](#) (a set of agreed terms) from the standardised learning support register (sLSR). This will make it easier to understand the data in your cluster. It will also make it easier for your cluster to transition to the sLSR when it becomes available.

The sLSR sits on the [Te Rito platform](#). Te Rito is New Zealand’s first national repository for the collection and exchange of information on learners. It uses international technical standards and privacy protocols to support the secure storage and use of data. Te Rito will improve access to data and decision making, which are precursors to better outcomes for students.

The sLSR will allow you to work with others to gather aggregated, anonymised data that gives an overall picture of need across your cluster. This data will provide a basis for working with the Ministry’s facilitation function to ensure that supports and services are available and responsive to the particular needs of your local community.

To keep up to date with developments with the sLSR, see www.education.govt.nz/getting-ready-for-the-new-standardised-learning-support-register/.

Assessment tools

As LSC, you will need to have an overview of the range and purposes of available assessment tools so that you can support teachers to gather additional information and plan next steps for a learner who is not making expected progress. The [assessment tool selector](#) on TKI will help you gain this overview.

The assessment tools in [The New Zealand Dyslexia Handbook](#)⁴ will help identify dyslexia-like traits that are relevant to the teaching and learning context. These tools should not be used to diagnose or label the learner, but the outcome of an assessment can alert teachers and whānau to the presence of dyslexia-like traits and help identify next steps for teaching and learning. The handbook also contains advice about approaches to support learners with dyslexia-like traits, as does TKI's Inclusive Education guide [Dyslexia and Learning](#).

As part of the *Learning Support Action Plan 2019–2025*, the Ministry is working to develop a universal school entry assessment kete. The information gained will help inform more targeted teaching and learning responses and assist in the early identification of dyslexia.

Children and young people with diagnoses

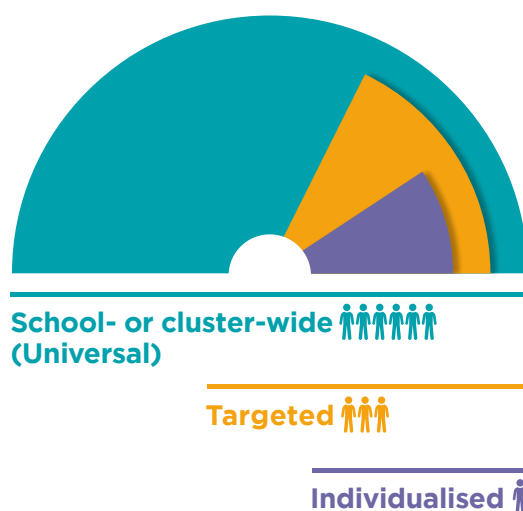
Some children and young people have a diagnosis of, for example, dyslexia, dyspraxia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), or autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Children with the same diagnosis may have characteristics in common but will also have unique traits, temperaments, strengths, and preferences. Getting to know them as people is just as important as it is for any other learner. No child should be defined by a diagnosis. They should be accepted and valued as a unique person and care taken to identify what support they need to be successful.

A diagnosis is not required to access Resource Teacher and Ministry support within the education system. These services are needs-based and designed to support learners to access the curriculum and enjoy success in their learning and relationships.

Responding to need

When planning responses to need, it is helpful to think about school- or cluster-wide changes that will benefit all learners, as well as group or individual responses. All responses need to be carefully monitored to see whether they are making a difference.

The diagram below illustrates the different ways of supporting children and young people with learning support needs. As LSC, you will have a role in determining where targeted or individualised support is needed and helping access this support, which will be underpinned by effective school- and cluster-wide practices that benefit all learners.



► ⁴ All schools and LSCs have received a copy of this handbook, written by New Zealand dyslexia experts Tom Nicholson and Susan Dymock.



School- or cluster-wide (Universal)

This approach involves the school- or cluster-wide supports that should be in place for all learners. When these are well-embedded and consistently implemented, they are sufficient for most learners.

The features of this approach are:

- inclusive values and a welcoming environment for all learners and their whānau
- a culturally responsive environment that values and promotes the identities, languages, and cultures of learners
- a quality instructional environment
- [a physical environment that supports inclusion](#) and enables all learners to easily access and engage with the learning and social environment.

School- or cluster-wide supports for learning are described within the effective pedagogies of *The New Zealand Curriculum*, as well as within the Inclusive Education Guides on TKI.

Targeted

A supportive environment is all that is required for most learners to be engaged and successful. However some will require targeted support. This could be support from a Resource Teacher, or an in-school intervention such as mentoring, a social skills group, or an extension programme for gifted learners.

Individualised

A small number of learners will require intensive, individualised support. Examples of individualised support from the Ministry of Education are assistive technologies (see page 22), [Te Kahu Tōi / Intensive Wraparound Service](#) (IWS), and the [Ongoing Resourcing Scheme](#) (ORS).



EXAMPLE: The LSC role in action

Nine-year-old Brodie is receiving individualised support for behavioural challenges from the Intensive Wraparound Service, as well as targeted support for literacy learning from an RTLit. His school is also working to ensure that active playground supervision strategies are in place. These school-wide strategies will benefit Brodie and all other children.

These approaches for Brodie are recorded on the school's learning support register and closely monitored by the LSC, in collaboration with the RTLit and Intensive Wraparound Service psychologist.

Children and young people at risk of disengagement

'At-risk' children and young people include those who have disengaged, or are at high risk of disengaging, from education. Disengagement from education can have a long-term impact on learners' wellbeing and life outcomes. Providing a range of adaptable, flexible supports to prevent disengagement and assist with re-engagement is priority 6 within the *Learning Support Action Plan 2019–2025*.

As LSC, you will help teachers to identify learners who may be at risk of disengaging and to respond before issues develop. As part of a team of teachers and pastoral support, you will work to ensure that unmet learning support needs are not creating barriers to learners' motivation and affecting their attendance and engagement. The learning support register (see page 16) will help you and the team to record information about learners at risk of disengagement and to document planned interventions that may include school- or cluster-wide, targeted, or individualised approaches.



EXAMPLE: The LSC role in action

Lilly is 13 and in year 9. Her teachers, Aisha (the school's LSC), and the year 9 dean are aware of her increasing anxiety, which is affecting her learning, engagement, and attendance. Aisha and the dean discuss their concerns with Lilly and Lilly's mother in an after-school meeting. They agree on some strategies to support Lilly during the school day and that Lilly will visit the family GP.

Aisha contributes to developing and implementing a pastoral-care plan, which includes providing a calming space that Lilly can work in when she's feeling overwhelmed, a year 13 tuakana who will check in with Lilly each morning before school, and regular meetings with the school counsellor. She also helps Lilly's teachers to adapt assignment expectations to reduce pressure on Lilly, offering more choice and longer time frames for task completion.

Aisha looks at the register to see if Lilly's situation reflects wider concerns about student attendance and engagement. She discusses her findings with school leaders during her regular catch-up, and they agree that some professional learning for all staff about strategies to support students experiencing anxiety would be useful. Aisha arranges for a local, school-based mental health service to work with staff on ways to create an environment that promotes wellbeing and resilience. The service also helps with strategies to support students like Lilly who have mental health concerns.

When Aisha explains the professional learning to the other LSCs in her cluster, they decide it is relevant to the whole cluster and develop a plan for sharing the learning more widely.

Individual education plans

An individual education plan (IEP) is helpful when significant collaborative thinking, goal setting, and planning is required for a learner with support needs. IEPs describe specific adaptations to the learning environment and differentiation of learning experiences to increase access and engagement for the learner. The process for establishing the plan includes assembling a team, sharing information, agreeing on achievable goals, and planning strategies, actions, and time frames to support their achievement. As LSC, you will help ensure that the team make-up is appropriate and includes whānau and, where possible, the learner. For Māori learners, the team may also include a local kaumatua or iwi representative and receive support from a Ministry kaitakawaenga.

In some settings, the LSC will contribute significantly to the writing and ongoing review of the IEP – for example, in secondary schools and wharekura where there are many teachers involved in the daily life of each student. Here the LSC will work collaboratively, ensuring the plan is informed by those responsible for the student's learning, while pulling together the necessary information to create goals and actions that are coherent and achievable in a variety of settings.

For most students with support needs, an IEP is not necessary. In these cases, the LSC can help to ensure that whole-class planning considers and addresses the needs of diverse learners. This could be as simple as photocopying learning materials onto blue paper or providing a reading pen.

When a learner receives additional support from, for example, a Ministry of Education learning support practitioner or RTLB, an IEP or a CAP (Collaborative Action Plan) will be developed. The LSC is likely to be part of the team that develops and reviews the plan.

[IEP Online](#) includes helpful information on IEPs and the key resource *Collaboration for Success*.

Supporting transitions

Supporting transitions is a supporting initiative within the *Learning Support Action Plan 2019–2025*.

Transitions can include:

- from an early learning service to school
- from a full primary or intermediate to a secondary school
- from alternative education back into school
- from a secondary school to employment or tertiary study.

Inclusive practice means that, as much as possible, all learners are present, participating, learning, and achieving at their local school or kura, or in another setting. For young children with learning support needs, a [graduated transition](#) to school may be necessary. Planning for this should begin well before they are due to start at their school or kura, with an agreed timeline that ensures that everyone knows what to expect.

For older children with learning support needs, your role may include working with school leaders and whānau to address barriers to engagement and attendance. This may involve helping to plan a transition back to school or kura if they have become disengaged.

Transitions between settings can be stressful for children and young people with learning support needs. During a transition, progress and successful strategies from one setting may lose ground in the next. This can be due to a lack of continuity, unclear expectations, or the loss of secure relationships built on trust and effective communication.

LSCs need to be aware of guidelines and requirements for transitions (see 'Supporting learners during transitions' on page 37). Your role is to ensure that they are well planned and supported. Key activities to support transitions include:

- visiting early learning services (including kōhanga reo) to talk with kaiako about children with learning support needs and to work collaboratively on transition planning; this could also involve meeting with early intervention teachers from the Ministry of Education or other child development services
- meeting with parents of prospective students with learning support needs and using their expert knowledge of their children to inform transition planning
- supporting teams, hubs, or syndicates to plan transitions between year levels
- arranging transition visits for learners and ensuring that appropriate support from external services such as the RTLB service is in place if needed
- involving local hapū or iwi in planning and support where appropriate
- taking a team approach to planning appropriate education or employment pathways beyond school for students with learning support needs.



EXAMPLE: The LSC role in action

At the beginning of each term, Matua visits the main early learning settings that feed into the primary school where he is the LSC. He talks to the kaiako and meets the children who may need support to transition to school. During one visit, he meets Poppy who is turning five soon and looking forward to going to school. Poppy has some communication challenges that sometimes make it difficult for those who don't know her well to understand what she is saying. With ongoing support from her kaiako, peers, and a Ministry of Education speech language therapist, she is becoming increasingly clear and confident in how she communicates.

To provide continuity and consistency for Poppy, her kaiako and whānau would like the school to adopt the strategies that have proved successful at home and in the early learning setting. Before these strategies were introduced, Poppy would often express frustration by hitting or pulling at people. She has stopped these behaviours in the early learning setting, but her family is worried they might return in an unfamiliar environment. Matua and the speech language therapist agree to work with the junior school teachers to ensure that they understand Poppy's communication strengths and areas for development and will use the strategies that work best for her.

These strategies include:

- being patient and giving Poppy time to get her message across
- reminding her of ways to get attention from teachers and her peers, such as touching them on the arm, smiling, or pointing
- giving her encouragement and feedback when she seeks attention from others in positive ways
- using visual communication aids (visual timetables and photo books) that help Poppy and benefit all children
- supporting Poppy's communication during small-group conversations, buddy reading, news sharing, and circle time
- modelling thinking and preparing to speak by using a 'think aloud' strategy.

Providing direct support

Occasionally, there will be situations and contexts where as LSC you are the most appropriate person to provide direct support for a learner. However, it's important to remember that yours is not a teaching role, so whole-class teaching, teacher release, and relieving are not appropriate uses of your time.

Direct support could include:

- using a coaching model to help a learner use strategies that support metacognition, executive functions, self-regulation, and self-management
- helping a learner to positively interpret the behaviours of others, respond appropriately to social cues, or work with others on a task
- helping a learner to prepare and plan for an assessment or other activity, use visual tools and organisers to get started, and maintain momentum.

ESOL

Some schools and kura will have a dedicated ESOL coordinator or specialist teacher to support students from non-English speaking backgrounds, including those born in New Zealand. In smaller schools, the LSC will likely provide coordination and support for teachers to work effectively with English language learners and their families. This may involve supporting teachers to understand and use the [English Language Learning Progressions](#) and to select strategies that work well with English language learners. To do this effectively, you will need to be familiar with [ESOL materials](#) that support teachers to get to know English language learners, plan for and support them, and record their progress. You may also need to make or assist with [funding applications](#).

Assistive technologies

Assistive technology is specialised equipment and technology that can help those with particular needs to participate and learn. As LSC, you do not need to be an expert in all assistive technologies – however, through regular connection with the Ministry’s facilitation function and Ministry and Resource Teacher practitioners, you will become aware of the variety of supports and solutions that are available. Most importantly, you will know how to access assistive technology when it’s needed.

In many cases, there are low-tech adaptations that can be made without an application for more specialised assistive equipment.

You can help teachers to determine what is needed by:

- analysing assessment information, observing in the classroom, and talking with teachers, learners, and whānau to identify barriers to learning
- checking to see if adaptations to the curriculum are sufficient to meet a child or young person’s particular learning needs – examples of adaptations include increasing the use of small-group, cooperative work; reducing task difficulty or the length of tasks; reducing or changing the reading or writing demands of a task; providing choices, visual supports, and graphic organisers; and providing digital supports
- checking to see if changing the learning environment helps – for example, adjusting a room’s lighting or acoustics, or using different types of furniture to create a low-distraction space
- providing small, inexpensive equipment such as pencil grips or timers to see what difference they make.

If these approaches are not meeting the child or young person’s particular learning needs, then an application for assistive technology may be required. The [application](#) is a three-step process.

Special assessment conditions

Students with support needs that affect their ability to be fairly assessed for national qualifications are eligible for extra help. NZQA grants entitlement to [Special Assessment Conditions \(SAC\)](#) that ensure these students have fair access to assessments and are able to show what they know, understand, and can do.

As LSC, you are the contact for students and whānau who have concerns about access to the curriculum or barriers to learning and achievement. Having an overview of need across year levels in the secondary setting and knowledge of the application process and eligibility for SAC will help you provide advice to teachers, students, and whānau.

Supporting whānau

As LSC, alongside school leaders and teachers you will have shared responsibility for engagement and partnership with whānau, as these are central to effective learning support. Whakawhanaungatanga – the building of respectful, reciprocal relationships – is the key to engaging with whānau. Their input and agreement greatly increase the likelihood that planned supports or interventions will achieve good outcomes.

As LSC, you will help whānau to partner successfully with your school or kura, to understand learning support systems and processes, and to know who to contact if necessary. A family's relationship with their child's teacher(s) is a key relationship, as they are the first point of contact. However, you will also need to prioritise your availability to whānau in order to answer questions, address concerns or barriers, and support engagement with relevant services.

Communication with families is not always straightforward and sometimes they find home-school relationships challenging. Some have reported that they have been given subtle messages that their local school is not suitable for their child with a disability or other learning support needs. As LSC, you will need to work with others to ensure that your school or kura is a [welcoming place for all whānau](#).

Effective support for whānau involves:

- valuing whānau as experts on their children and ensuring they are part of any planning and decision making that affects them
- ensuring whānau are able to exercise agency and authority in the education of their children
- addressing whānau concerns in a timely way and recognising these concerns as an opportunity to strengthen your inclusive values and practices
- working collaboratively with whānau and teachers where a problem-solving approach is required to address concerns or review or change a plan
- being vigilant about any messaging or behaviour that can create barriers to presence, participation, learning, and achievement for those with learning support needs.

For Māori whānau, ensuring effective support could also include:

- working with the school or kura leadership team to make contact with local iwi or kaumatua
- meeting with the Strategic Advisor, Māori, or kaitakawaenga in your local Ministry office.

The Inclusive Education guide [Partnering with Parents, Whānau, and Communities](#) includes helpful information on supporting whānau. LSCs may also find the RTLB framework [He Urunga Tū](#) useful as an example of engagement when partnering with local kaumatua, hapū, and iwi.



Supporting teachers

An important part of your role as LSC will be to support teachers by:

- contributing to the identification of learning support needs across your school or kura and cluster through the provision of tools and advice
- promoting evidence-based strategies and practices and providing guidance about what will make a difference for students
- working with your school or kura learning support team to identify professional development needs in learning support and to arrange for professional learning to be provided
- working with the learning support team to decide on the best use of available resources to meet the needs of learners
- working with other LSCs across your cluster to provide teachers with access to additional advice in order to meet the learning support needs of all their learners.

As LSC, you may lead professional learning opportunities yourself; there are many resources available to help you with this – for example, the [Facilitating Professional Learning guide and modules](#) on the website *Inclusive Practice and the School Curriculum*. Alternatively, you may draw on the expertise and experience of LSCs and teachers across the cluster, or coordinate external facilitation from the Ministry of Education, the RTLB service, or another external provider.

As a registered teacher, you will naturally draw on *The New Zealand Curriculum* or *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* and refer to *Te Whāriki* when promoting inclusive values and supporting effective teaching for students with learning support needs.

Within *The New Zealand Curriculum*, the key competencies are a fundamental tool for supporting planning and goal setting for all learners, and the effective pedagogies (page 34) provide a foundation of evidence-informed teaching approaches that benefit all learners.



The [learning outcomes](#) in *Te Whāriki* can help teachers in junior classrooms to prepare for children transitioning from an early learning setting. [He Māpuna te Tamaiti](#) offers guidance about promoting social and emotional competence with young children, which is useful and relevant for teachers of 5- and 6-year-olds.

For examples of inclusive curricula in action, see *The New Zealand Curriculum's* webpage [A Curriculum for All Students](#) and *Te Whāriki's* webpage [Inclusive Practice](#).



EXAMPLE: The LSC role in action

Naomi is an LSC in a small rural school. She is meeting with James, a speech language therapist, and Christine, a teacher, to talk about Christine's new student Eddie and his progress with oral language. They have identified the need for a planned approach to set Eddie up for success in his new classroom. Eddie's family have talked to Naomi about his learning difficulties, and they have shared assessment information from his previous school that confirms Eddie's need for targeted learning support.

Eddie is in year 5. He is working towards developing the knowledge and skills for reading and writing at level 2 of the curriculum. However, he is experiencing significant challenges in developing the oral language skills he needs to progress his reading and writing. This is affecting his achievement and engagement across the curriculum.

Christine and Naomi are aware of the strong relationship between oral language difficulties and reading comprehension and so want to accelerate Eddie's progress in oral language alongside his reading and writing. James poses the following questions to get a sense of where Eddie is at and to identify areas of classroom practice that may need strengthening.

- What does assessment data tell us about Eddie's strengths and needs in oral language?
- What goals should we set with Eddie and his family?
- What strengths in oral language does Eddie's family have that they can draw on?
- What opportunities does Eddie have to develop and practise oral language skills within his daily routines? Is he receiving sufficient feedback and encouragement?
- What scaffolds are needed to support Eddie to meet speaking and listening requirements across curriculum contexts?
- Based on the information you have gathered, what goals will you work on?

Naomi and Christine agree with James that activities that support vocabulary acquisition across the curriculum are particularly important for Eddie. As oral language development depends on having authentic opportunities to talk and listen, they agree to plan ways for Eddie to be frequently engaged with his peers in tasks that require talk during high-interest activities. Christine will introduce new vocabulary to Eddie and his peers and facilitate ways for Eddie to use and retain it.

Eddie has some difficulty following instructions, planning, and remembering the sequence of steps required to complete a task, so they also plan strategies that support metacognition and self-management. They agree that the explicit teaching of these strategies will benefit others and decide to make this a class-wide approach.

Naomi checks in with Christine regularly and encourages Eddie's family to share their ideas about what works well for him, as well as any concerns about his progress and engagement at school.

Supporting teachers to work with external services

Ministry of Education and RTLB practitioners provide support across school-wide, targeted, and individualised approaches to learning support. Through discussion with your RTLB cluster manager or liaison RTLB and the Ministry's facilitation function, you will be able to identify the right service to meet the needs of individual learners or groups of students or to provide school- or cluster-wide support.

The Ministry's facilitation function will also help you access other services, expertise, and resources in your local area, such as health and social services and kaupapa Māori services for children and families.

In some cases, a co-working approach will be most appropriate. For example, an RTLB might support the teacher with curriculum adaptations and strategies to support learning, while a Ministry of Education behaviour practitioner provides expertise in relation to behaviour goals.



You can help a teacher make the most of support from other services by:

- ensuring that current data, including assessment information, is available to support discussion
- working with the teacher and whānau to clarify priorities and goals for the learner; this will give the service provider or practitioner a clear sense of what is needed and expected
- gathering key people to meet with the service provider or practitioner to begin collaborative planning
- supporting and encouraging the teacher to follow the resulting plan and use the strategies and interventions as intended.



What to expect from a behaviour practitioner

A behaviour practitioner (Ministry of Education psychologist, Special Education Advisor, or RTLB) brings additional expertise when a different or more intensive approach needs to be added to school-wide or targeted supports already in place.

The practitioner can help with:

- safety planning and risk assessment
- assessing need and planning strategies and interventions to trial with learners
- environmental changes in outdoor and learning spaces to better support learning and engagement
- support to monitor, review, and evaluate interventions
- school- or cluster-wide changes to support positive behaviour for all learners
- identifying strategies for whānau at home or recommending external parenting support
- resourcing to support plans for learners – for example, teacher aide or specialist teacher time, teacher release for professional learning, and parenting programmes.

It is important to remember that a practitioner works with the teacher in a supportive role, building on their strengths while bringing a fresh lens and additional expertise, tools, and resources. Their goal is to empower the teacher and whānau, so they feel confident in using effective strategies tailored for the learner in the school, kura, or home context.

To help with the effectiveness of agreed support, consider the following questions with the teacher:

- What is a realistic time frame for fostering positive change?
- Has enough time been allowed to implement planned strategies?
- How comfortable are you with the practitioner spending time in your classroom?
- What do you understand and expect will happen when agreed goals have been met?
- When and how will we know that more intensive support can be reduced? (Remember that after this occurs, if the situation changes, you will be able to access support again.)

See the Ministry of Education's [Learning Support](#) webpages for information about Communication, Behaviour, Early Intervention, ORS, and other learning support services, and [RTLB Online](#) for information about the RTLB service.

Supporting teacher aides

As LSC, your role in supporting teacher aides and promoting best use of the teacher aide resource will vary depending on the size of your school and whether there is a SENCO or leader who has this responsibility.

Teacher aides support teachers and help learners with diverse needs to participate and learn. They may provide direct support to individual learners by facilitating their engagement with peers, clarifying tasks, and giving prompts, reminders, and additional feedback. In doing so, it's important that they do not create social isolation for those with learning support needs and that they help them to be as independent as possible.

At times teacher aides will work with other individuals and groups in the class, freeing up the teacher to work directly with those with learning support needs.

Teacher aides need clear direction, so they understand what is expected of them and the expected outcomes from an approach or learning activity. Working with teachers, you can help clarify the role of teacher aides, as well as ensure that they have relevant professional learning opportunities to support their practice and develop their capability. The website [Teachers and Teacher Aides Working Together](#) provides an excellent set of PLD modules for use with teachers and teacher aides. It also has a [self-review tool](#) that leaders, SENCOs, and LSCs can use to understand how well their school supports teacher aides to be effective in their roles and to plan next steps to strengthen this support.

The following questions can support inquiry into the effective use of teacher aides.

- Are teacher aides being used effectively and to their potential? If not, what systems and processes would make a difference?
- Are their roles and responsibilities clear?
- Do they receive appropriate guidance, support, and professional learning?
- Are relationships between teachers and teacher aides collegial and collaborative?

Working with the leadership team

As LSC, you will work with school or kura leaders to monitor and improve the provision of learning support at school, kura, or cluster level. Yours is an influential role. Your knowledge and relationships will assist leaders to build and maintain a culture of inclusive education in their cluster.

School and kura leaders will want to have regular discussions and undertake planning with you when you understand the needs identified in the learning support register and the support needs of teachers and other adults working with children. They will also rely on your collaboration with the Ministry, Resource Teachers, and the rest of the cluster to identify the best use of local resources to meet those needs.

You should aim to provide the following assistance to the leadership team:

- supporting them to take a continuous inquiry approach to monitoring and improving learning support systems and practices
- identifying needs and advising on professional learning opportunities for teachers in order to strengthen their learning support practice
- collating data about numbers, needs, and trends and using it to support planning and decisions about resource allocation. Sources may include: the learning support register; records of requests for support from the Ministry of Education and Resource Teachers; Interim Response Fund (IRF) usage; and attendance, stand-down, suspension, and exclusion data
- ensuring whānau and student voice is represented and heard when the school or kura is making decisions about learning support.



EXAMPLE: The LSC role in action

Matthew is the LSC in an urban primary school. He meets regularly with school leaders to talk about staff professional learning needs. At one meeting, they discuss beginning teachers Jamie and Hannah, who have asked for help to support positive behaviour in their learning spaces. Hannah is particularly concerned about how best to support Leo, a new student with ASD.

Matthew and the school leaders agree that a team approach will be most supportive for Jamie and Hannah. Matthew suggests that it would be useful for all staff to complete the [self-assessment tool](#) in *Teaching for Positive Behaviour*. This will help all staff to identify areas to work on in their teams and will strengthen behaviour support strategies across the school.

Jamie and Hannah would also like to take part in an Incredible Years Autism teacher programme, and Matthew agrees to coordinate this. He also helps Hannah to request support from an RTLB for Leo and applies for interim response funding for additional supervision in the playground while he settles into his new environment.



Supporting culturally sustaining practice

As LSC, you will work with the wider learning support team and school or kura leaders to strengthen staff's cultural competence, to promote culturally sustaining practices, to reflect the identity, language, and culture of learners and whānau, and to prioritise caring, respectful relationships.

As Aotearoa New Zealand becomes more diverse, cultural competence becomes increasingly important. In particular, migrant and refugee families need a culturally informed approach that supports their sense of belonging and helps them to successfully navigate school systems and processes. Information about supporting refugee and migrant learners and engaging with families from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds is available from [ESOL online](#) on TKI.

In your role as LSC, you will help others to prioritise culturally sustaining practices within caring, respectful relationships. You will support your school or kura and wider cluster to get to know whānau well and to encourage whānau to communicate their aspirations for their children's learning and wellbeing. Leaders and teachers will then be better able to support learners in ways that reflect whānau values and cultural practices. When schools include and respond to the diverse languages and cultures of the community, they show that cultural diversity is viewed as a strength and resource that is valued and celebrated.

When educators appreciate the unique place of Māori as tangata whenua, they are more likely to embed bicultural practice in visible ways in teaching, learning, and relationships. [Ka Hikitia](#) (the Māori education strategy) asks us all to step up our commitment to make sure that all tamariki and their whānau can experience educational success as Māori and achieve excellent outcomes. Bicultural practice that reflects a Treaty-based approach strongly supports the holistic wellbeing of tamariki and rangatahi in education communities.

A bicultural approach to the provision of learning support ensures that:

- relationships are developed and nurtured based on reciprocity and respect
- Māori values inform planning and practices
- mokopuna are considered within the context of their whānau and are seen as inseparable from them
- whānau expertise is valued and whānau members have agency and authority in decision making, goal setting, and problem solving
- school leadership teams engage in a process of continuous inquiry, asking *Is the provision of support meeting the needs of our Māori tamariki, rangatahi, and whānau? How does our approach look, sound, and feel from a te ao Māori perspective? Are there barriers to participation and contribution for our Māori whānau? If so, how can we remove these? Are we open to feedback and input from whānau, hapū, and iwi?*

LSCs can help to monitor how well culturally sustaining values are acted on across the cluster, drawing on resources such as [Tātaiako: Cultural Competencies for Teachers of Māori Learners](#) and [Tapasā: Cultural Competencies Framework for Teachers of Pacific Learners](#).

Working in the wider cluster context

Schools working together are a powerful way of improving teaching and learning for all students, including those with learning support needs. Most LSCs are part of a wider team of LSCs across a cluster. This supports seamless learning support as children and young people move between settings. It also allows LSCs to benefit from each other's experience, skills, and perspectives as they address common challenges across the cluster.

As a team, LSCs can:

- analyse data to get a big picture of learning support needs across their cluster
- work collaboratively with the Ministry's facilitation function to bring in resources and services in response to these needs
- develop and share good practice, expertise, resources, and information in ways that will benefit learners, teachers, and leaders across the cluster
- support transitions within and across the cluster by sharing information and planning together.

All LSCs need to familiarise themselves with the charter of each school in their cluster, which includes its mission, vision, and values. If you are working in an English-medium school and your cluster includes a kura or kōhanga reo, you will need to build your understanding of their values and foundational documents – see [Te Korowai](#) (for kōhanga reo), [Te Aho Matua](#) (for Kura Kaupapa Māori), and [Te Tihi o Angitu](#) (for Ngā Kura ā Iwi). For all LSCs, building such knowledge will help them to understand what is considered vital and fundamental for the development and wellbeing of Māori learners.



EXAMPLE: The LSC role in action

Mere is the LSC in a rural area school that is part of a cluster of 10 schools. The LSCs, other learning support staff, and pastoral teams in the cluster have been meeting to identify learners whose need for additional support may be contributing to reduced engagement and attendance.

The group agrees that whole-school practices need to be strengthened across the cluster, to better support and engage these students. They recognise that all staff need to take a more intentional approach to implementing more inclusive teaching strategies. They agree to work with the cluster's RTLB to facilitate whole staff professional learning about these strategies and how to apply them in classroom contexts.

As a result of this PLD, teachers across the cluster trial the following strategies:

- using pictures, diagrams, symbols, and concept maps to clarify main ideas in oral and written instructions and explanations
- identifying and pre-teaching key topic vocabulary to support students' understanding of instructions, descriptions, definitions, and formulas
- using graphic organisers to help students make connections between big ideas and to notice patterns during the inquiry process
- using text-to-speech and speech-to-text programs
- offering additional instruction, guided practice, or peer tutoring in areas where students are experiencing particular challenges
- varying the ways in which a class or group can respond to an idea, allowing appropriate 'wait time' for students to think and prepare their responses
- differentiating tasks – for example, by reducing their size and breadth or allowing more time.

The LSCs and other learning support and pastoral staff continue to monitor students with learning support needs and are pleased with the positive impact of the strategies on their attendance and engagement.

Getting started

Ngā mahi tīmatanga

Your first few terms are important in your new role as an LSC. You may have already been working in one of the schools or kura in the cluster, or you may be new to the cluster. Regardless, it's a time to establish relationships, become familiar with the network of available services, and establish a shared understanding of the parameters of your role.

As you get established, your role is to understand what's happening in learning support and inclusive practice across the school or kura and cluster. This is a valuable opportunity to gain an understanding of the 'big picture' by talking to colleagues, whānau, and students and by looking at data. This will provide you with a baseline of current needs that will be central to planning next steps with your cluster.

Here are some practical suggestions to get you started.

- Work with leaders to establish the key expectations for your role and agree on how responsibilities will be shared among the wider learning support team.
- Meet with the Ministry's facilitation function (likely to be a service manager) and RTL cluster manager.
- As an LSC cluster team, meet with key contacts from health services, Oranga Tamariki, and other relevant services in your area – enlist the support of the Ministry's facilitation function for this.
- Meet with whānau to introduce yourself and explain your role – for example, during a school information evening.
- Become familiar with how your school gathers, records, and shares information about learning support needs.
- With support from the Ministry's facilitation function, work with the other LSCs from your cluster to gather and analyse a wide set of data to gain an overview of learning support needs in your community.
- Become familiar with the [privacy and information sharing protocols](#) you will need to work within.
- Take time to become familiar with existing tools, resources, services, and information that support inclusive practice and pedagogy. The appendices and many links in this resource provide a good starting point for this.
- Set up meetings with individual teachers and teaching teams to talk about learning support needs in their learning spaces. This will give you a sense of how students with learning support needs are viewed, and how well systems and practices are currently working in identifying and responding to need.
- Work with teachers to use the tools in the [Dyslexia Kete](#) to identify and respond to learners with dyslexia-like traits.
- Visit the feeder early learning services or schools in your area to introduce yourself and to establish regular communication and a planned approach to supporting transitions.

Kia kaha tō mahi!



Appendices

Ngā āpitihanga

1. Glossary

Acceleration

Programmes such as [Programmes for Students](#) that provide short interventions aimed at accelerating learning for students who are not making expected progress. Acceleration is also an approach to teaching [gifted learners](#) through full-year advancement or other forms of programme adaptation (e.g., curriculum compacting) to ensure they receive the right level of challenge. Acceleration is a form of differentiation. See also Differentiations.

Accommodation

Altering the environment, curriculum, or tools to help those with learning support needs to access content and engage in a regular programme of learning.

Adaptations

Changes made to learning supports, such as the school environment, classroom, and teaching strategies – the ‘how’ of learning – to suit learners’ individual needs. [Adaptation](#) increases learner access to the curriculum and meaningful participation in learning. See also Differentiations.

Differentiations

Changes made to the classroom programme (curriculum content and expected responses – the ‘what’ of learning) to suit learners’ individual needs. [Differentiation](#) increases learner access to the curriculum and meaningful participation in learning. See also Adaptations.

Dyscalculia

A specific and persistent [learning difference](#) that affects a learner’s achievement in mathematics despite high-quality, evidence-based instruction and interventions.

Dyslexia

A specific and persistent learning difference that affects a learner’s acquisition of certain literacy and numeracy skills. [Dyslexia](#) occurs despite high-quality, evidence-based literacy instruction and interventions.

Dyspraxia

[Neuro-developmental differences](#) affecting motor skills, body movements, coordination, and spatial awareness.

Enrichment

Learning opportunities that give depth and breadth to the curriculum and that align with learners’ interests, abilities, qualities, and needs. [Enrichment](#) can be provided to all learners and usually includes an element of challenge.

Giftedness

A term used to describe a wide range of exceptional abilities that children may display from any age. The definition and understanding of giftedness are complex and cover a range of different types of ability. [Giftedness](#) means different things to different communities and cultures in New Zealand, and can be found in any family, culture, ethnicity, or socioeconomic group. Asynchronous development – uneven intellectual, social-emotional, and physical development – is very common among gifted children. Twice exceptionality, sometimes referred to as 2e, describes individuals with exceptional strengths in some areas and significant weaknesses or learning difficulties in others.

Neurodiversity

A broad term that includes (but is not limited to) dyslexia, dyspraxia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, autism spectrum disorder, foetal alcohol spectrum disorder, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, trauma-related disorders, and auditory or visual processing disorders. Neurodiversity is a challenging concept because it encompasses needs across a wide spectrum of degree and intensity.

Technologies for Learning

In the classroom, items, pieces of equipment, or tools that help learners access the curriculum. These technologies vary from low- to high-tech and support all learners to take part and learn. [Assistive technology](#) is specialised equipment that ‘assists’ individual learners with learning support needs to access and participate in the curriculum and learning environment. It includes a range of tools and specialised equipment – for example, [technology tools for learning](#), hearing and vision devices, and specialised furniture. Some equipment is funded through the [Ministry of Health](#) or ACC.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

A [framework](#) based on inclusive design to help schools, kura, or early learning services to create flexible learning environments to include all learners and help them succeed. The three fundamental principles of UDL relate to engagement, representation, and expression. [About Universal Design for Learning](#) is a comprehensive website on the framework.

2. Recommended resources

There are many resources that will be relevant for the work of LSCs. The resources below are those that every LSC will find helpful and refer to frequently.⁵

Aromatawai – Assessment in Te Reo Māori

A [site](#) providing links to available assessment tools and reports on assessment in te reo Māori. An assessment resources map shows currently available tools, and there are a number of tools in development. See also the website of Te Marautanga o Aotearoa for a [list](#) of Māori medium assessment tools.

Child and Youth Wellbeing Strategy

The Government’s [national strategy](#) that sets out a shared understanding of what all children and young people want and need for good wellbeing and what we can all do to help.

Collaborative Planning for Learning

A [guide](#) that provides strategies for leaders and teachers for building genuine, learning-focused partnerships with learners and whānau. The guide addresses three areas of collaborative planning: learning environment or classroom planning, individual or group planning, and cluster-wide planning.

⁵ The descriptions for many of the resources in Appendix 2 and programmes and services in Appendix 3 are adapted from their websites. Copyright on each description is as ascribed at its source.

Dyslexia Kete

A [collection of resources](#), including *About Dyslexia* (an MoE booklet supporting the teaching and learning of literacy to learners with dyslexia in English-medium settings), a bank of relevant non-Ministry resources, a handbook (sent to all schools), a parent pamphlet, and a [Tīpaopao brochure and two videos](#) for supporting students with dyslexia in Māori-medium settings.

ESOL Online

A comprehensive [website](#) that supports teachers to respond effectively to the needs of their English language learners.

Gifted Learners: Tukuna Kia Rere

A comprehensive [website](#) providing support for gifted education in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Guide to Assessment Tools and Reporting

A practical [guide](#) that assists schools with assessment and reporting across the curriculum. See also the [assessment tool selector](#), which helps schools choose the most appropriate tool for a particular purpose.

Guide for Groups Sharing Learning Support Information

A valuable [resource](#) that helps education providers and other service providers safely and appropriately share information about children and young people who need learning support.

Inclusive Education Guides

A [series of guides](#) detailing strategies and resources to help educators recognise, plan for, and meet the needs of the diverse learners in their school community. LSCs can browse the guides to build their professional knowledge, as well as find specific information and guidance to support particular learners and situations.

Inclusive Practice and the School Curriculum

A [resource](#) for teachers and leaders designed to build professional knowledge and create a shared understanding of inclusive practice within the New Zealand Curriculum. The website includes a [framework](#) for implementing an inclusive curriculum, [examples](#) from the classroom, and [modules](#) for leaders of PLD on inclusive teaching and learning programmes.

Inclusive Practice in Secondary Schools

A [resource](#) with many helpful ideas for secondary school leaders, intended to start discussion and help them to reflect on what is working well and what may need to improve.

Ka Hikitia

A cross-agency [strategy](#) for the education sector, in which Māori enjoy and achieve education success as Māori as they develop the skills to participate in te ao Māori, Aotearoa, and the wider world.

Kauwhata Reo

A new [tool](#) based on a Māori world view and developed by mātanga Māori (Māori experts). The tool enables kaiako and ākonga to access te reo Māori resources on one central platform.

Kia Hiwa Ra! Listen to Culture—Māori Students' Plea to Educators

A book by Angus Macfarlane exploring models of good teaching in diverse classrooms by culturally cognisant teachers – teachers who demonstrate connectedness with students and who see their classrooms as places where they listen to culture in order to forge meaningful relationships that enhance the quality of the learning environment.

Our Code, Our Standards

A [document](#) setting out the high standards for ethical behaviour expected of every teacher in Aotearoa New Zealand and describing expectations of effective teaching practice.

Standardised Learning Support Register (sLSR)

[Information](#) for schools, kura, early learning services, and kōhanga reo on how to create their own learning support register.

Supporting Learners During Transitions

Valuable resources include [Continuity of Learning: Transitions from Early Childhood Services to Schools](#) (from the Education Review Office), [Transitioning Children with Learning Support Needs from Early Learning into School](#), the [National Transition Guidelines for Students with Additional Learning Needs](#), [Education Matters to Me: Transitions](#) (from the office of the Children's Commissioner), and 'Transitioning out of alternative education' in [Alternative Education Guidance](#).

Teachers and Teacher Aides Working Together

A [set of modules](#) that teachers and teacher aides complete together to strengthen working relationships, improve role clarity, and build knowledge of inclusive practice. The site includes a [self-review tool](#) for school leaders to use to understand where their school is at and what they should do next to support teacher aides to be effective in their roles.

Teaching for Positive Behaviour

A practical [resource](#) by Tracy Rohan that supports teachers in all New Zealand primary and secondary schools to embed culturally sustaining practices and to understand and draw on effective strategies to enhance students' behaviour, engagement, participation, and learning.

Teaching in Inclusive School Communities

A highly useful text by Suzanne Carrington and Jude MacArthur on incorporating diversity and inclusive practices in today's classroom, available for purchase as an e-book. Chapter 7 (Inclusive education and Māori communities in Aotearoa New Zealand) is particularly helpful in relation to culturally sustaining practice in our schools.

What an Inclusive School Looks Like

An [information sheet](#) that describes what an inclusive school looks and feels like. It can help educators to reflect upon and review the inclusive values, policies, and practices in their school.

3. Programmes and support services⁶

[Alternative Education](#)

A short-term intervention programme for students aged 13–15 who have become disengaged from mainstream education. Students are given a meaningful, individualised learning programme and supports to help them transition back to mainstream school or on to further education, training, or employment.

[Altogether Autism](#)

A service that provides autism spectrum information and advice. Run as a partnership between Life Unlimited Charitable Trust and Parent to Parent New Zealand, their specialists research information requests and provide up-to-date, evidence-based information.

⁶ This is not an exhaustive list. A range of other providers exist, some of whom charge for their services. Your local Ministry facilitation function can help identify helpful programmes and support services in your area.

[Autism New Zealand](#)

An organisation that advocates for people with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) and provides support, information, workshops, and education on ASD for individuals, whānau, and professionals.

[Behaviour Support](#)

A team of Ministry of Education specialists that supports children or young people experiencing significant, ongoing behaviour issues. Team members work with the child or young person, their whānau, school, and other specialists to assess the child's needs and design tailored support for them.

[Blind and Low Vision Education Network New Zealand \(BLENNZ\)](#)

A national network of educational services for children and young people who are blind, deafblind, or have low vision. It provides education and specialist teaching services to enable these learners to reach their full potential.

[Deaf or Hard of Hearing Support Services](#)

Support for children and young people with permanent hearing loss in one or both ears and/or a hearing disorder. Support may be offered by resource teachers of the deaf, advisors on deaf children, early intervention teams, or by providers such as the deaf education centres of Ko Taku Reo Deaf Education New Zealand, the First Signs programme, Cochlear Implant programmes, and Deaf Children New Zealand Tamariki Turi O Aotearoa.

[Dyslexia Foundation of New Zealand \(DFNZ\)](#)

A national organisation that provides a voice for, and services to, the estimated one-in-ten New Zealanders with dyslexia, as well as to those supporting them. DFNZ is recognised as a strong lobby group for dyslexia in New Zealand and advocates for supporting neurodiversity in two key areas, education and justice.

[Early Intervention Support](#)

A range of specialist support services for children with additional learning and development needs and their whānau and teachers. Support is available from birth until a child starts school.

[HCN – High and Complex Needs](#)

A cross-agency team that coordinates education, health, and social services to support learners with high and complex needs – that is, ongoing, persistent, and complex needs and/or behavioural issues that can't be effectively addressed through a single-service approach.

[In-Class Support \(ICS\)](#)

Funding allocated to support students who have continuing high-learning needs and who aren't funded through the Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS). ICS funding contributes to teacher-aide support for individual students.

[Incredible Years Parent Programme](#)

A programme that provides parents of young children with skills to manage a child's behavioural problems and to create a home environment that will enrich the child's social and emotional development.

[Incredible Years Teacher Programme](#)

A programme that provides support for teachers of young children to help manage disruptive behaviours and create a positive learning environment.

[Interim Response Fund \(IRF\)](#)

Short-term funding to keep a learner engaged in learning after experiencing a significantly challenging behavioural event. This is an interim response while a comprehensive intervention is planned and implemented.

[Kaitakawaenga](#)

Specialist Ministry of Education advisors who support Māori whānau to engage with the Ministry's Learning Support services and other agencies and who provide cultural advice to Ministry specialist staff to help them build effective working relationships with Māori tamariki and whānau.

[Learning Support Fund](#)

A fund to support interventions developed collaboratively between schools and RTLBs for learners in years 0–10.

[Mental Health Crisis Services](#)

DHB crisis assessment teams that provide mental health services in emergency situations.

[Ministry of Education Learning Support](#)

A range of learning support services provided or facilitated by the Ministry of Education.

[New Zealand Association for Gifted Children \(NZAGC\)](#)

A charitable organisation that promotes the needs of gifted children and their families at a national level and supports and fosters initiatives at local levels to meet those needs.

[Ongoing Resourcing Scheme \(ORS\)](#)

A scheme that provides a package of specialist support, additional teaching, and contributions to teacher aide support for learners with high or very high needs to help them attend school, join in, and learn alongside their peers. To be eligible for the ORS, children and young people must meet one or more of the ORS criteria.

[Parent to Parent](#)

A not-for-profit organisation that provides information, education, and support for families of children and adults with any type of disability or health impairment.

[Physical Disability Service](#)

A Ministry of Education service that provides support for learners with physical disabilities to help them learn at school. Its focus is working with teachers and schools to help them adapt the environment to meet their learners' needs.

[Positive Behaviour for Learning \(PB4L\)](#)

A range of evidence-based programmes and frameworks that support long-term, sustainable changes in the behaviour and wellbeing of children and young people in schools and early learning services. PB4L programmes include [PB4L School-Wide](#), [Restorative Practice](#), [Incredible Years](#), and [Huakina Mai](#).

[Regional Health Schools](#)

Schools for children with high-health needs who are too unwell to attend their regular school. There are three regional health schools, but health school teachers teach children anywhere in New Zealand.

[Residential Special Schools \(RSS\)](#)

Schools that provide specialist support for learners with educational needs relating to vision, hearing, socialisation, behaviour, and learning.

[Resource Teachers: Learning and Behaviour \(RTLBs\)](#)

Specialist teachers who help schools support the achievement of learners with learning and/or behavioural difficulties. The RTLB service provides support and upskilling to help teachers manage their learners' additional needs, with a particular focus on Māori and Pacific children and young people moving into state care.

Resource Teachers of the Deaf (RTDs)

Specialist teachers who support learners who are deaf or hard of hearing. Each child or young person has an individual plan and support focuses on building the capability of teachers and whānau to support the learner.

Resource Teachers of Literacy (RTLits)

Specialist teachers who provide reading literacy, writing literacy, and oral language support to learners experiencing difficulties with literacy learning. Advice is provided to classroom teachers (indirectly) and to individuals or small groups (directly).

Resource Teachers of Māori

Specialist teachers supporting te reo Māori pedagogy and practice in kura and schools, using culturally sustaining, strength- and evidence-based inquiry practices to support Māori language learners and teachers. Resource Teachers of Māori can be contacted through the regional offices.

Resource Teachers: Vision (RTVs)

Specialist teachers who assess a learner's needs in a classroom or at home. They work with teachers and whānau of learners who are blind or have low vision to provide appropriate support, set goals, and create learning plans. See also BLENNZ.

School High Health Needs Fund

Funding for learners with significant health conditions who need care and support for more than six weeks. The fund pays for a teacher aide, with the aim of helping the student to learn to manage their own care needs effectively and quickly.

Special Education Grant (SEG)

A grant that is part of a school's operational funding and that supports the inclusion of those with learning support needs.

Specialist Teacher Outreach Service

Specialist teachers who work with learners receiving ORS support and their teachers, school support staff, and whānau. Outreach service teachers visit local schools to support learners via a range of activities, such as monitoring and planning, assessing needs, and creating tailored programmes. See also Ongoing Resourcing Scheme (ORS).

Speech, Language, and Communication Support

Support from speech-language therapists for learners with speech, language, and communication needs. Speech-language therapists are specialists who focus on building the capability of whānau and educators to support a child's ability to communicate effectively in their daily life.

SWiS (Social Workers in Schools)

Qualified social-work practitioners who work with learners and their whānau to find solutions to issues impacting on the learners' education, wellbeing, and rights.

Te Kahu Tōi, Intensive Wraparound Service (IWS)

A comprehensive, holistic response for children aged 5–14 with behavioural, social, and/or learning needs and who experience significant challenges and require individualised support. The approach is driven by the ideas and perspectives of the learner and their whānau.

