

Niue Department of Education

Inclusive Education Policy 2012

CONTENTS

1. Definition and Scope 3
2. Legality in the Niue Context 4
3. Objective 6
4. Rationale 6
5. History of Policy Formulation 7
6. General Policy Recommendations 9
7. Responsibilities 13
 - 7.1 Department of Education 13
 - 7.2 Special Needs Education Task Force 14
 - 7.3 School Principals 14
 - 7.4 SENCO 15
 - 7.5 Class and Subject Teachers 15
 - 7.6 Special Needs Teacher Aids 16
 - 7.7 Parents and Caregivers 17
8. Monitoring and Evaluation of Policy 17
9. Review of the Inclusive Education Policy 18

Appendix 1: Classification of Students Targeted in Inclusive Education Policy

- i. Students with physical disabilities 18
- ii. Students with specific learning difficulties 19
- iii. Students with behavioural or emotional problems 19
- iv. Students who are special ability, talented or gifted 20
- v. Students who lack the necessary proficiency in either Vagahau Niue or English language 21

Appendix 2: Strategies and Guidelines 21

- i. Identification and assessment 21
- ii. The school curriculum 22
- iii. Partnerships in education 23
- iv. The learning environment 23
- v. Differentiation in the delivery of learning / Instruction 24
- vi. Evaluation and improvement 24
- vii. Reporting 25
- viii. Professional development 25

Appendix 3: Recommendations of the Special Needs Scoping July 2012 26

Appendix 4: Glossary of Terms, Acronyms and Definitions 27

Appendix 5: Acknowledgements 27

References 28

1. DEFINITION & SCOPE

Who are students with special learning needs?

“An inclusive, learning-friendly environment (ILFE) welcomes, nurtures, and educates all children regardless of their gender, physical, intellectual, social, emotional, linguistic, or other characteristics. They may be disabled or gifted children, street or working children, children of remote or nomadic peoples, children from linguistic, ethnic or cultural minorities, children affected by HIV/AIDS, or children from other disadvantaged or marginalized areas or groups.”

(Salamanca Statement & Framework for Action on Special Needs Education 2000)

The Niue Inclusive Education Policy is designed to facilitate and optimize the learning of students with special needs.

Students with special learning needs are those students residing in Niue who for various reasons are not developing to their full educational potential or are at risk of not achieving the major achievement objectives of the New Zealand curriculum as taught in the Niue schools, including Early Childhood Education Center (ECE), Niue Primary School (NPS) and Niue High School (NHS)

They include those whose health, abilities, performance or behaviour is significantly different from their peers. This will include students who are talented and gifted as well as those with high learning needs.

While the vast majority of such students can be assisted with additional support as part of their regular classroom experience, a small number of students have disabilities or impairments that require ongoing specialist support and access to highly specialised programs and facilities.

The policy will include all students who are marginalized for whatever reasons, including physical disability and special learning needs, but also those who are disadvantaged by social or language background.

The policy will cover all students with “individual needs”, defined as a child or student over the age of three years, for whom educational provision needs to be made which is additional to, or otherwise different from, the educational provision made generally for children/students of the child’s age at this school.

For the purpose of this policy, these include:

- Students with physical disabilities
- Students with specific learning difficulties
- Students with behavioural or emotional problems
- Students who are special ability, talented or gifted
- Students who lack the necessary proficiency in either Vagahau Niue or English language.

Our policy recognizes that there is a continuum of special educational needs and a continuum of provision to meet these needs.

Further information regarding the classification of the students targeted in this policy can be found in APPENDIX 1.

2. LEGALITY IN THE NIUE CONTEXT:

The provision of educational opportunities for the people of Niue is one of the fundamental responsibilities for the Cabinet of Ministers and is enshrined in the Niue Constitution (1974). Article 61(2) of the Constitution provides that it is the responsibility of Cabinet for establishing and maintaining in Niue such public schools and for making such other provision as it considers necessary to provide educational opportunities for the people of Niue.

The Education Act 1989 provides for the education of the people of Niue under article 61(2) of the Niue Constitution and sets the legal parameters for the education system.

The Act establishes the Department of Education and provides for Cabinet's powers and responsibilities pursuant to Article 61(2) to establish and maintain schools for the education of the people of Niue. Cabinet, through the Minister for Education has the control and direction of the Department and of the officers thereof, and subject to the Act, generally administers the Act.

It is the duty of the Minister to promote the education of the people of Niue and, subject to the Act and Constitution, to control, administer and maintain all Government schools. The Director of Education is the administrative head of the Department. The Minister may delegate powers to the Director, and the Director may also delegate powers to other appropriate officers or employees.

The Niue Public Service Commission appoints the officers of the Department and other employees as may be necessary for the purposes of the Act.

Section 38 of the Act provides that courses of instruction in all government schools shall be secular and of such content and standards which takes into account the following broad aims:

- a) To adequately equip the people of Niue with knowledge and skills required to achieve national goals;
- b) To provide the people of Niue with the highest possible standard of education;
- c) To promote an understanding in the values of learning;
- d) To continue to incorporate Niue's traditional arts, crafts and values in education development; and
- e) To continue with the development of bilingualism (Niuean and English).

All courses of instruction must be approved by the Minister after consultation with the director.

The Niue National Strategic Plan (NNSP) provides the national strategy to meet not only the country vision of *Niue ke Monuina* but also the goals that are set under the national development pillars. Specific strategies are identified to achieve the national development pillars. As part of strategic and careful allocation of resources to achieve the goals of each pillar, the national budget is aligned to the Plan so that the strategic initiatives, activities and targets can be achieved¹.

Under the Plan, education falls within the Social national development pillar:

“Education, Training and Human Resource Development: Provide and maintain quality and relevant education services to enable and inspire all, as life-long learners, to become responsible citizens responsible to change and make appropriate moral choices contributing to the human and skills needs aligned to national aspirations.”

The specific strategies for the Social national development pillar, together with targets and indicators that fall within the scope of the work of the education department are:

- To enhance the quality of education to raise the achievement of learners
 - Maintain, sustain and improve the quality of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), Early Childhood Education (ECE), primary and secondary education

- Review and redesign the adopted New Zealand Curriculum Framework to reflect the Niue context vision and values, curriculum principles, learning areas and key competencies by 2010
- Raise and strengthen quality of teacher's capacity to enhance and meet curriculum achievement objectives for students
- Increase investment in curriculum – based resources to support teaching and learning
- Provide and strengthen effective partnerships and engagement between schools, parents and wider community to support student learning
- To secure, promote, to raise status of our unique identity as Niue people
 - Review, design and implement a Niue Curriculum Framework to include Vagahau Niue,
 - Develop to increase range of vernacular resources to support teaching and learning
 - Provide professional development for teachers and personnel to improve Niue knowledge to support student learning and achievement
- To increase the effectiveness of governance and management of the education system
 - Review the Niue Education Strategic Plan 2005-2010 and adapt to changing factors as appropriate
 - Review the education legislation and enact appropriate amendments by 2010
 - Practice good governance to ensure effective education services are improved, maintained on management of finance, human resources, management of assets and physical resources
 - Strengthen alignment and maximise utilisation of domestic and external development partner's resources

Section 27 of the Niue Education Act (1989) provides that it is the duty of the parent of every child who is of school age and is suffering from disability of body or mind of such magnitude as to require special education to take steps to provide efficient and suitable education for the child. Where the parent is unable to, the Director for Education may direct that the child be sent to such special school, or class, or other institution providing special education.

No such institution exists in Niue.

However, due to the isolation of Niue from New Zealand and the expense and social unacceptability of separating families or forcing them to leave Niue to have their child's educational needs met, and taking into consideration the global trend of inclusiveness as opposed to separation, The Education Department needs to provide for these special needs children within the Niue context and existing facilities.

The Niue school curriculum is based on the New Zealand curriculum and has been governed by the policies of this curriculum.

The New Zealand school curriculum makes full provision for inclusive education and special education needs of children through articulating learning policy and providing the specialized staff, resources and learning environment to provide optimum opportunity for special needs students to maximize their learning outcomes, according to their individual abilities.

3. OBJECTIVE

What is the purpose of this policy?

This policy aims to achieve an education system that identifies students with special learning needs in a timely manner, implements appropriate educational and intervention programmes and monitors their progress within a culture of acceptance and understanding where the students are included in the normal curriculum and activities of the school in so far as possible.

4. RATIONALE.

Why do we need this policy?

There are a proportion of children who may not be developing or achieving to their potential within the current education system due to physical, mental, emotional, behavioural or cultural factors..

The fundamental principles underlying our policy are that:

- All children and students have a fundamental right to education and must be given the opportunity to achieve to their full potential.
- All students need an educational system that is fair and equitable.
- The needs of all pupils who may have special educational needs must be addressed;
- Children/students with special educational needs require the greatest possible access to a broad and balanced curriculum;
- The needs of most pupils will be met in the school without an Individual Educational Plan (IEP);
- Children/students with special educational needs should be educated alongside their peers;
- The knowledge, views and experience of parents are vital. Effective assessment and provision will be secured where there is the greatest possible degree of partnership between parents and their children and the school.
- Inclusive schools are effective in maximising learning outcomes and in developing positive attitudes towards others, creating acceptance and achieving beneficial education for all.

5. HISTORY OF POLICY FORMULATION

The evolution of the Inclusive education policy in Niue has undergone a number of precedents and milestones.

- **1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**
Ensures the right for all children to receive education without discrimination on any grounds. Niue was a signatory in 1995.
- **The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)**
‘Disability has been recognized as an evolving concept and that the disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers that hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others.’
- **The Pacific Regional Strategy on Disability (PRSD) 2011-2015**

The PRSD was formally endorsed at the Forum Disability Ministers' Meeting (FDMM) in October 2009 and the resultant report fully endorsed subsequently by the Leaders' Meeting in August in Vanuatu in 2010..

- Sandra Cubitt's Report 2010 approved and endorsed by cabinet, clearly listed the following goal as part of the Three Year Education Support Project 3.1.3

“Assist the schools to implement a special education programme”

“Special education programme in place by end of 2011, ready for implementation in 2012.”

- Appointment of EPM (Dec 2011) and Cabinet Approval of Terms of Reference, Action Plan and first annual Budget (Feb 2012) based on implementing the Cubitt Report.

One item in the Results framework:

Output 2: Special Education Policy developed with associated implementation programme (including training)

- Directors' of Education meeting on Inclusive Education, “Advancing Inclusive Education in the Pacific” Tanoa International Hotel, Nadi Fiji 19-21 October 2011
- Niue National Policy on Disability 2012- 2015 which clearly states in Policy Area 6:

6.1: Strengthened and supportive special education services and programs to all children with special learning needs and disabilities:

6.1.1 The Department of Education to ensure the provision of special needs teachers including training and curriculum development.

6.1.2 Strengthen capacity building of teachers to cater for specific learning needs of children with disabilities (in-country workshops, overseas short term training, correspondence.)

- Report of the Scoping Exercise in Niue ECE, NPS and NHS in July 2012 by two qualified and registered NZ clinical , educational psychologists as part of the three year Educational Support Project (funded by NZAid)

The two psychologists assessed, tested and observed eighteen students, eleven of whom exhibited symptoms and behaviours which may indicate “special learning needs” where intervention of a specialist to assist education would benefit the child. Although legal considerations prevented any “official diagnosis” the children tested and observed included those exhibiting behaviours which were typical of Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, low levels of cognitive functioning, global developmental delay, auditory perceptual problems, autism spectral disorder, Down Syndrome and various cognitive delays, Others tested had behavioural problems.

There were also a number of students who could not be tested due to time constraints or parental consent withheld. Teachers feel that at least five of these students are also special needs cases. Additionally, the village play centers were not scoped.

The recommendations of these psychologists are listed in Appendix 3. They clearly support the need for this policy to be established and implemented.

6. GENERAL POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

<p>Overall Policy Provide an inclusive learning environment for all students marginalized by physical disabilities, special learning needs, exceptional gifted intelligences, emotional /social problems or language background.</p>	
<p>Objective</p> <p>The basic human right of ALL children to be enrolled in school and have equal and fair access to education is reflected by the policy, respected and implemented in Niue schools.</p>	<p>Strategy / Actions</p> <p>All children/students with individual needs should be identified and assessed as early as possible by their teacher, who will act quickly and report to the school Principal for actioning and ensuring follow-up resources, programs and support.</p> <p>Children/students have important and relevant information. Their support is crucial to the effective implementation of any individual educational programme and they have the right to be heard. They should be encouraged to participate in decision making about provision to meet their special educational needs</p> <p>Specialist staffing should be provided in Special Needs, English as Second Language teachers and counsellors so as to support and accommodate all such students.</p> <p>There should be careful recording of a child's/student's individual educational needs, the action taken and the outcomes;</p> <p>Provision of a Professional Development (PD) Program for all teachers who have special needs students or other marginalized students in their classes.</p> <p>The annual school / education budget includes an allocation for staffing and resourcing for the students covered by the Inclusive Education Policy,</p> <p>Transparent and constructive communication and reporting of the schools with parents and caregivers of students with special needs and collaborative decision-making and planning.</p>
<p>Policy Area 1 Provide an inclusive learning environment for all students with physical disabilities</p>	

Objective	Strategy / Actions
Students with physical handicaps / disabilities are not hindered or prevented from participating in equal and fair mainstream education.	Identification and accurate assessment of possible disabled students at an early age by paediatrician so that effective early intervention can be implemented.
	Promotion of students with physical disabilities through the compulsory part of the education system with their peers to ensure social acceptance and participation.
	Modification of teaching programmes for students with physical disabilities so that they can take part (as far as possible) within the regular classroom programme (inclusion);
	Provision of a Professional Development (PD) Program for all teachers who have students in their classes with physical disabilities..
	Provision of altered assessment and teaching procedures to ensure that students with physical disabilities are not disadvantaged;
	Allocation of scholarships to Niue teacher trainee(s) who want to specialize in Special Needs Education.

Policy Area 2

Provide an inclusive learning environment for all students with special learning needs

Objective	Strategy / Actions
Students with special learning needs are not hindered or prevented from participating in equal and fair mainstream education and additional and appropriate learning support is provided.	Class teachers who recognize or suspect students have special learning needs must report to the principal or SENCO who will arrange for early assessment by educational psychologist together with paediatrician so that intervention and support can be provided in a timely manner.
	Promotion of students with special learning needs through the compulsory part of the education system with their peers to ensure social acceptance and participation.
	Employment of a fulltime Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCO) and 2 or 3 teacher-aides trained in special needs, to work across the ECE, primary and secondary school levels.
	The SENCO and special need teacher -aides would work alongside subject and class teachers in identifying special needs and establishing, monitoring and reviewing IEPS.

	Provision of a Professional Development (PD) Program for all teachers who have special needs students in their classes.
;	Provision of alternative programs for the education of students who are not able to be included in the regular classroom where necessary and beneficial (withdrawal)
	Provision for all children/students with individual needs will be made by the school in partnership of SENCO, class /subject teachers with the child's parents.
Policy Area 3	
Provide an inclusive learning environment for all students who are gifted or special abilities	
Objective	Strategy / Action
The students, who comprise the 10 – 20% of the average school population which is talented /gifted or have exceptional abilities, are given the necessary opportunity and support to achieve their full learning potential.	Particularly gifted students are identified in their early schooling by their class teachers and their progress and achievement closely monitored through assessments.
	Class and subject teachers are responsible for providing extension activities and strategies to challenge gifted students and to enhance and satisfy their learning needs
	A student identified as very talented or gifted through exemplary assessment may have the opportunity of accelerated promotion if the parents agree.
	Students identified as gifted or talented may need an Individual Education Plan designed in collaboration with themselves, the SENCO or counsellor, their teachers and parents.
	Appointment of a (part time) School Academic Counsellor to assist gifted and high ability students in online and distance learning programs or subjects not available at NHS or at their level.
	Opportunities and resources are made available to enrol and support gifted and talented students in online and distance subject and courses (Te Kura a Tuhi) which are not otherwise available to them in the Niue school system
	Careers Advice is offered the gifted students at appropriate stages in their education in collaboration with their parents.
Policy Area 4	
Provide an inclusive learning environment for all students with emotional or social problems	
Objective	Strategy / Action
Children with emotional or behavioural problems which affect their attendance, performance or achievement at school, should be	Appointment of a (part-time) School Counsellor or use of the Community Affairs counsellor to assist students with behavioural problems.

given the necessary support and counselling to help them participate successfully.	
	A MoU with Department of Health to refer students not making progress to a clinical or educational psychologist for assessment and counselling if necessary.
	The school has the responsibility of accurate and regular reporting to parents /caregivers and communication in partnership about problems and progress.
	Students who are socially marginalized by verbal or physical bullying will be given counselling and support and action taken to prevent the bullying.
Policy Area 5	
Provide an inclusive learning environment for all students marginalized by language	
Objective	Strategy / Action
Children who are disadvantaged or marginalized by insufficient knowledge of either English or Vagahau Niue are given additional instruction, support and resources to close the gap and succeed in their studies.	Special support classes are offered in English as a Second / Foreign / Additional Language (ESL / EFL/ EAL) to students whose previous exposure to English has been insufficient to meet their learning needs.
	Students of non-Niue background or those returning from overseas with limited Vagahau Niue are given support materials (glossaries, translations, bilingual materials, extra classes) to help them cope with the demands of the curriculum at their level.
	Teachers with ESL / EFL qualifications are employed or existing teachers are encouraged and supported to upgrade their ESL qualifications.

7. RESPONSIBILITIES

Every section of the education system has a role to play in the education of students with special learning needs. By each section fulfilling their responsibilities as outlined below, an inclusive education system will exist which recognises the diversity of learners' abilities and provides for these within a culture of acceptance and understanding.

7.1 The Department of Education will provide:

Regular scoping exercise and procedures involving a multi-disciplined team educational psychologists and medical paediatricians to accurately identify and diagnose students who have special learning needs.

Employment of a Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCO) to oversee the Inclusive Education program for all three sectors (ECE, NPS, NHS)

Maintenance of a resource centre at the Professional Development room which houses a range of special education materials and resources available for use by teachers and stakeholders

A registry of local, regional and New Zealand specialists and stakeholders in special education to facilitate communication and provide a means of ongoing support;

Three trained teacher aides to work in schools to support teachers in the education of students with special learning needs.

Professional Development and training for all teachers who have students with special learning needs in their classes.

Where necessary, possible and appropriate, making school buildings physically accessible to children and students with special needs;

Additional resources and assistive devices for students with special learning needs or disabilities where necessary and possible to assist them in accessing learning and assessment.

A referral system and network of professionals in NZ and the Pacific region to assist with students whose needs cannot be catered for with local Niue specialists and resources.

Maintenance of confidential records of identification procedures, assessments and results and reporting of this information to the principal, DOE, parents/ caregivers and the students themselves

Upholding a memorandum of understanding (MOU) with the departments of Health and Community Affairs for providing a multi-disciplined approach to cater for special needs students.

Informing the community of new development and initiatives in the education of young children and students with special learning and teaching needs.

7.2 The Special Needs Education Task Force is responsible for:

Arranging the initial scoping exercise to identify and assess students with special needs or students otherwise marginalized in their educational opportunities.

Formulating and approving the Inclusive Education Policy.

Communicating and informing the public of the extent of special needs in Niue schools and what policies, procedures and support are needed.

Supporting the principals and SENCO in their responsibilities to help special needs students succeed.

Identifying potential sources of funds to support Special Needs programs.

Periodic review and update of Inclusive Education Policy after three years.

7.3 School Principals are responsible for:

Implementing the Inclusive Education policy within their schools;

Enrolling *all* students regardless of ability;

Ensuring that students with special learning needs are not discriminated against by assessment and teaching procedures;

Referring cases to the SENCO, and/or health professionals where necessary;

Ensuring truancy is monitored and the requirements of the education act in regard to truancy

are implemented;

Informing the community and the Ministry of Education about the programmes in place and the achievement of students with special learning needs;

Guiding the development and implementation of procedures for the early assessment and identification of preschool children (ECE Principal) and students with special learning needs (early intervention programme).

Promoting students with special learning needs through the education system with their peers;

Ensuring that high school students with special learning needs are supported in the careers education programme;

Ensuring that accommodations and modifications to the teaching programmes are made for those students so that they can take part (as far as possible) in the regular classroom programme.

Reporting to the school committee when special conditions or resources are necessary to ensure equal educational opportunities exist for all students.

Overseeing the implementation of IEP's and monitoring the effectiveness of special education provisions in the school.

Keeping parents and caregivers informed through reporting on the progress made and challenges faced by students with additional learning needs.

7.4 The Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCO) is responsible for:

Guiding the three school sectors in the implementation of the special needs education policy

Providing advisory services to schools to enhance the development of individual and school wide intervention programmes for students with special learning needs;

Formulating an Individual Education Plan (IEP) with relevant and achievable learning goals for each student with additional learning needs (ALN), in collaboration with parents, teacher and the students themselves.

Supervising special needs teachers / teacher assistants in their supporting of special needs students.

Ensuring that permanent teachers receive professional development in inclusive education practices throughout their career. Professional development includes in-service, personal study and school based courses;

Liaising with other agencies and stakeholders to assist schools to provide services to students with special learning needs;

Taking a lead in the development of special needs policy and strategy updates and improvements;

Representing Niue in regional workshops, conferences and committees.

Maintaining updated research information as to the extent and nature of the special learning and teaching needs of students.

Maintaining a resource centre which contains:

- a range of special education materials and resources available for use by teacher and stakeholders;
- a registry of local, national and international resource people; and stakeholders in special education to facilitate communication and provide a means of ongoing support.

7.5 Class and Subject Teachers are responsible for:

- Producing and implementing educational plans with the input of parents and caregivers which meet individual students' needs (IEP's) and are consistent with Department of Education guidelines and national curriculums;
- Maintaining confidential records of identification procedures, assessments and results.
- Reporting this information to the principal, DOE, parents/ caregivers and the students themselves;
- Promoting students with special learning needs through the education system with their peers (dual responsibility with principal);
- Regularly monitoring in terms of outcomes, the effectiveness of programmes for student with special learning needs;
- Ensuring that children learn in an environment where they are safe, valued, respected, encouraged, free from verbal and physical threat or bullying and where they experience success;
- Reporting to the principal where special conditions or resources are necessary to ensure equal educational opportunities exist for all students; and
- Encouraging the active participation of parents to work with teachers in classroom programmes.

7.6 Special Needs Teachers/ Teacher Aids are responsible for

Facilitating the learning of one to five students with additional learning needs in their charge both inclusively within the mainstream classroom and in withdrawal situations where necessary.

Assisting the SENCO, teachers and parents in preparing an Individual Education Plan (IEP) for each of their students.

Implementing the Individual Education Plans (IEPs) of the student(s) in their charge.

Accompanying the students in the care to mainstream classes and assisting them to participate in classroom activities with other children or differentiated tasks prepared by the classroom / subject teacher.

Preparing supplementary materials to scaffold the learning of their students in the mainstream class.

Withdrawing the special needs student for individualized and differentiated instruction where this is beneficial and necessary.

Liaising with the classroom / subject teachers on instruction, learning needs and assessment tasks.

Keeping accurate records and logs on the progress made by their students.

Reporting to the Principal, SENCO, peer teachers and parents /caregivers on progress made and problems encountered by the students.

7.7 Parents / caregivers are responsible for

Providing input during the initial assessments by teachers, SENCO, psychologist and paediatrician.

Providing input and working collaboratively with SENCO and teachers to design an appropriate Individual Education Plan (IEP) for their children and managing expectations so as to produce optimal and achievable outcomes.

Providing a conducive and enabling home environment which supports the IEP and school learning.

Being responsive to communications from the school about problems faced and progress made by their children.

Attending meetings related to the needs of their children and actively participating in professional development / training opportunities when invited.

8. Monitoring and Evaluation of the Policy

Accurate records are to be maintained in schools of all special needs /disabilities students, initial and subsequent assessments, what interventions were made and progress achieved.

An Education implementation plan to be designed for the Inclusive Education Policy.

Sufficient financial resources are to be allocated from the Government / Education budget or from external sources to implement the Policy.

Build alliances with relevant disability /special learning needs organizations and agencies for information sharing, networking and independent evaluation (national, regional and international.)

Establish MoA (Memorandum of Agreement) with Department of Health and Department of Community Affairs to participate in the implementation and the evaluation of the policy.

The Special Needs / Inclusive Education Task Force should evolve into a permanent committee with membership of diverse stakeholders to monitor and evaluate the implementation of the Policy.

9. Review of the Inclusive Education Policy

There is a need to regularly update the policies outlined to ensure that they are relevant and reflect the best international standards and practices.

While regular review will largely be undertaken by the Special Needs Education Task Force there is also the need for more formal reviews of policies and practices to occur. It is envisaged that a formal review process of Inclusive Education policies, practices, programs and management should occur every three years.

APPENDIX 1:

CLASSIFICATION OF STUDENTS TARGETTED BY THE INCLUSIVE EDUCATION POLICY;

(The criteria outlined are consistent with World Health Organisation standards.)

A child who has a learning difficulty:

- Has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of children/students of the same age;
- Has a disability, condition or situation which either prevents or hinders the child/student from making use of educational facilities of a kind provided for children/students of the same age in the school;

For the purpose of this policy, students with learning difficulties include:

i) Students with physical disabilities:

These may include students who suffer from one or more of these disabilities:

a) Physical disability, health impairment or mobility problems:

A significant physical /mobility disability and /or a significant health impairment which may require regular para-medical support or treatment.

Examples of the former may include a child in a wheelchair with spina bifida or cerebral palsy; the latter may include a child with frequent epileptic attacks, multiple sclerosis, diabetes, asthma or haemophilia..

Evidence of this condition or impairment would be a statement by a doctor or medical practitioner which may also detail support requirements.

b) Visual impairment (fully or partially blind)

Visual acuity less than 6/60 with corrected vision or where the visual fields are reduced to a measured arc of less than 10 degrees.

An assessment or report from a doctor or vision specialist would serve as evidence.

Includes students with visual processing disorder.

c) Hearing impairments (fully or partially deaf)

A bilateral sensori-neural hearing loss that is moderate / severe/profound and where the student requires intervention or assistance to communicate.

Evidence would be an audiogram with a written statement from a doctor.

Includes students with auditory processing disorder.

d) Speech impediments

Children with communication disorders –unable to speak at all (mute) or have other communication disorders (e.g, stuttering)

ii) Students with specific learning difficulties or additional learning needs (ALN)

The criteria would include sub-average general intellectual functioning which is demonstrated by a full-scale score of two standards deviations or more below the mean score on an existing achievement test and where the student has been exposed to quality teaching but failed to make sufficient progress.

A history and evidence of an ongoing problem with an expectation of a continuation during school years.

Evidence would include a written report provided by a psychologist or special education teacher in either the current or previous school.

Examples may include Autism Spectrum disorders, Attention Deficit Disorder, Dyslexia, Dysgraphia, Dyscalculia, Down Syndrome, delayed cognitive development, intellectual impairment,

iii) Students with behavioural or emotional problems

Student displays disturbed behaviour to a point where special support in a withdrawal group or special individualized attention is required

AND

Student displays behaviour so deviant and with such frequency and severity that they require regular monitoring and specialist support

AND

The severe behaviour cannot be accounted for by: Intellectual disability, hearing and/or visual impairment or health issues

AND

A history and evidence of an ongoing problem with an expectation of continuation during the school years.

They may be identified by:

1. Difficulty to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.
2. Difficulty to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships with peers and teachers.
3. Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.
4. A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.
5. A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

Such students often have emotional or social problems from home or with peer group. They quite often have a truancy pattern and frequently change residence or schools. They may suffer from mild to severe schizophrenia or depression. Sometimes these students are the victims of verbal or physical bullying by classmates or teachers and therefore become socially ostracised.

As a result, their attendance and /or achievement at school is jeopardized.

The evidence for this pattern can be gathered from previous school reports and records, observations by classroom teachers and information collected by the school counselling officer from interviews with the student and parents / caregivers.

A school(s) counsellor needs to be appointed and trained in assisting such students or the services of a counsellor from Department of Health or Community Affairs utilized. .

iv) Students who are special ability, talented or gifted

Students who are gifted in one or more areas also have special needs. For these students it is important that programs are provided that extend their abilities and assist them to develop their intellectual, artistic or other talents to their fullest potential.

v) Students who lack the necessary proficiency in either Vagahau Niue or English language.

For various reasons, students may lack the language proficiency in either Vagahau Niue or English to achieve to their potential in academic subjects.

As a result, they feel unsuccessful, marginalized and may develop behaviour problems in the classroom and /or patterns of truancy.

Such students may come from a background where:

- their parents are expatriate and they only speak English or another language not related to Vagahau Niue at home.
- they relatively recently arrived from another Pacific Island community or country where English is not widely spoken.
- they are expatriate / foreign born Niueans who have recently returned to Niue without a background in the language.

Strategies which may be used by the schools and teachers to assist these students may include:

- materials which scaffold and strengthen language in the subject areas.
- special English as a Second Language (ESL) classes offered.
- purchasing specialist resources and books for EFL
- alternative assessment strategies in English, Vagahau Niue and subjects.
- employing teachers with qualifications in EFL / ESL / EAL
- providing training for subject and grade teachers in EFL teaching methods and techniques

APPENDIX 2:

STRATEGIES & GUIDELINES

The implementation of an effective Inclusive Education Policy will require a concerted, systematic and collaborative effort at the school level in several key areas.

These strategies and guidelines are to assist schools to develop procedures for the identification, education and assessment of students with special learning needs.

There are seven key areas which should form the basis of planning and procedures for students with special learning needs.

The key areas are:

Identification and assessment

The school curriculum

Partnerships in education

The learning environment

Differentiation in the delivery of learning / Instruction

Evaluation and improvement

Reporting

Professional development

i) Identification and assessment

To be accurate in the identification of students with special needs, they need to be assessed in their early years and assessment thereafter must be regular and across all years of schooling. Students' needs should be continually monitored, as should changes in their achievement level, rate of progress and if their behaviour differs noticeably from past performance or that of their peers. Special needs students are of all ages and their needs can change at different times due to a range of situations and circumstances.

Assessments may include:

- classroom assessments
- teacher observations
- student achievement profiles;
- standardised assessments at certain grade levels (assTTle,)
- diagnostic tests to identify students who may need special assistance;
- other information such as attendance, participation and behaviour;
- monitoring and recording changes in students', rate of progress and if their behaviour differs noticeably in a sustained manner from past performance or that of their peers.

ii) The School Curriculum

The planning and implementation of school-wide and classroom programmes, units and lessons must reflect the requirements of the NCEA and the Niue Curriculum Framework, be relevant and challenging for students and be flexible in meeting the needs of students with special learning needs. The topics of study, activities students do and the way classrooms are organised overall, determine how effective learning is for all students.

Strategies may include:

- Providing opportunities for and encouraging all students to participate in school activities to the best of their abilities;
- Providing appropriate resources for students with special learning needs;
- Ensuring all students have access to learning materials and resources;
- Identifying and catering for individual learning styles through delivery of the curriculum in a variety of ways;
- Planning and implementing education programmes, which teach children to accept and include people who are different;
- Actively promoting non-discriminatory language and by teachers role modelling appropriate language when referring to individuals and diverse groups

iii) Partnerships in Education

Effective education takes place when all key stakeholders are included: the student, the parent/caregiver and school personnel. Each stakeholder is able to provide important information and support in educating students with special needs.

Schools can cooperate with stakeholders in various ways:

- Consult with parents and caregivers at an early stage when children are identified as having special learning needs;
- Involve parents caregivers and the students themselves in planning, implementing and reviewing programmes for students with special needs; and
- Collaborate where appropriate and necessary with relevant government departments and non-government organisations to provide quality services and support to children with special learning needs.

iv) The Learning Environment

Students learn best in an environment that is safe and stimulating. Students need to be valued, respected and encouraged. They need to experience success in school in order to build confidence and achieve to their full potential. Students with special needs often do not experience success and lack confidence in their abilities. The learning environment (the classroom and the school as a whole) plays a crucial role in the educational development of students with special learning needs.

- An effective learning environment can be maintained by:
- Ensuring students learn in an environment free from verbal and physical threat or bullying;
- Making the school buildings and facilities accessible to students with impaired mobility;
- Providing an attractive, clean and functional school environment;

- Providing opportunities for all students to work together with children with special needs and people with disabilities with appropriate support, resources and information;
- Providing guidance and counselling to students in need of emotional support,

v) *Differentiation in the Delivery of Lessons / Instruction*

Processing is the way students think and learn. All students learn differently and process information in a unique manner. Information is taken in through the five senses. Some students learn better by watching (visual learning) while others learn better by hearing (auditory learning). The students who seem to do worse in the traditional school setting often learn best by doing (kinaesthetic learning). If students experiencing learning difficulties are taught to maximize the use of their strongest learning style and strengthen their weakest learning systems, then learning becomes easier and more efficient.

Sometimes a student is labelled or misdiagnosed as a slow learner or experiencing learning difficulties, when in fact, he does not have the opportunity to learn using his dominant learning styles.

Differentiation in instruction and assessment can be achieved by:

- Determining the learning styles of each student through testing, interviews, and observation (e.g. Gardner's Multiple Intelligences).
- Making the students aware of their strongest and weakest learning styles (multiple intelligences)
- Teachers presenting information and content using a variety of multi-sensory approaches
- Students being allowed and encouraged to demonstrate their learning through a variety of assessment modes.
- Students being given the opportunity and training to develop their weaker learning styles.

vi) *Evaluation and Improvement*

Programmes designed to cater for students with special learning needs, must be evaluated regularly and adjusted when necessary to ensure their success. Information such as attendance, participation, behaviour and academic performance is important in reviewing programmes and planning changes.

Development information can be used for improvement by:

- Regularly recording and assessing students' academic progress in relation to stated goals, achievement objectives and outcomes in work plans and individualised education plans (IEP);
- Analysing other information such as attendance, participation and behaviour to determine changes in student performance; and
- Using all information to review programmes, IEPs, instruction and make improvements where necessary.

vii) *Reporting*

All schools have procedures in place for the reporting of student progress and achievement. Parents, caregivers and other stakeholders should be notified as soon as teachers identify that a student's achievement level, rate of progress or behaviours differ noticeably in a sustained manner from past performance and his/her peers. Stakeholders must be given regular feedback regarding the progress of students with special learning needs.

Effective reporting can be achieved by regularly providing information to stakeholders through a range of means including work samples, student profiles, written reports, interviews and telephone conversations.

viii) Professional Development

Schools have procedures in place whereby teacher professional development needs are established and recommendations made. Appropriate professional development for teachers is essential in improving educational outcomes for all students, including those with special learning needs.

The skills of teachers can be improved by:

- Working cooperatively as a school staff to meet the special learning needs of students;
- Identifying professional development needed to support the teaching of students with special learning needs;
- Meeting identified professional development needs using available resources locally, nationally and internationally.

APPENDIX 3:

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SPECIAL NEEDS SCOPING EXERCISE JULY 2012

1. Employment of a fulltime Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCO) and 2 teacher-aides trained in special needs, to work across the ECE, primary and secondary school levels. These people would work alongside existing teachers in identifying special needs and establishing, monitoring and reviewing IEPS.
2. Regular scheduled visits to Niue by ENT specialists and a Paediatrician to monitor “at risk” children already identified, and provide a screening for newly identified “at risk” children.
3. Ongoing input into the Special Needs initiative with visiting specialist reviewing input, monitoring progress and providing teacher PD and support.
4. Regular teacher PD to “empower” those who are at the “coalface” in dealing with individual learning needs. It would be important to aim to minimise the use of jargon/diagnostic terms but rather to use terms which provide guidance as to how the teachers could assist.
5. Possible MoUs with e.g. Colleges of Education in NZ Universities regarding the possibility of short-term student placements with the school. This would provide a rich learning environment for the student teacher and additional “hands on” support in the classroom for both children and teachers.
6. Information, reports, assessments provided for the individual children in the ECE or primary school setting should be transferred to the high school when the child starts there. A more seamless transfer of information would enable the child’s current teachers to be fully informed of that child’s individual learning/teaching needs.
7. Appropriate information regarding the child’s needs be passed on to the parents to ensure that they are aware of the interventions and strategies being used. If considered necessary, advice and guidance could be given by SENCO to parents on ways to optimise child’s development in the home setting

Appendix 4: Glossary of Acronyms

ALN	Additional Learning Needs
CRPD	Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EPM	Education Project Manager
EAL	English as an Additional Language
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
FDMM	Forum Disability Ministers' Meeting
IEP	Individualized Education Plan
ILFE	Inclusive learning-friendly environment
MoA	Memorandum of Agreement
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NHS	Niue High School
NPS	Niue Primary School
PD	Professional Development
PRSD	Pacific Regional Strategy on Disability
SENCO	Special Education Needs Coordinator

Appendix 5: Acknowledgments:

The Department of Education recognizes and appreciates the contributions of the following persons in the formulation of this policy:

Members of the Special Education Needs Task Force:

Paul Alexander Hetyey- Facilitator / Education Project Manager
Birtha Togahai - Chairperson
Gaylene Tasmania – Department of Community Affairs
Diamond Tavevahi – Department of Community Affairs
Trevor Tiakia - Parent
Pui Hopotoa – Parent
Jason Sakalia – NHS representative
Saniata Tafatu – NPS representative
Sifahei Laufoli – ECE representative

The input and recommendations of the consultants and participants of the Pacific Disability Forum (PDF) meeting in Niue 13 -16 August 2012 are also appreciated.

Helen Butler and Michelle Van Dyk, the educational psychologists who undertook the scoping exercise in July 2012, also offered valuable insights and advice as well as base-line data.

Special acknowledgment and gratitude to Peleni Talagi, Niue Crown Law Office, for her invaluable guidelines as per legal framework and policy precedents.

The ongoing support and encouragement of the Director of Education, Mrs. Janet Tasmania, was vital for the completion of this policy.

The funding to enable this policy was from NZAid.

References:

Butler, Helen & Van Dyk, Michelle July 2012 Report of the Scoping Exercise in Niue ECE, Niue Primary School and Niue High School. July 2012

Cook Islands Ministry of Education Special Needs Education Policy 2002

Convention of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2009

Cubitt, Sandra (2010) "The Education Support Program for the Niue Education System 2010-2013"

Directors' of Education meeting on Inclusive Education, "Advancing Inclusive Education in the Pacific" Tanoa International Hotel, Nadi Fiji 19-21 October 2011

Niue Constitution 1974

Niue Education Act 1989

Niue National Policy on Disability 2012 -2015

Niue National Strategic Plan (NNPS) (2009 -2013)

Pacific Regional Strategy on Disability (PRSD) 2011-2015

Samoa Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture, Special Needs education policy 2006

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989