



Education Report: Outcomes of the NZSL@School evaluation

To:	Hon Jan Tinetti, Associate Minister of Education		
Cc:	Hon Chris Hipkins, Minister of Education		
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Purpose of Report

This Report:

- informs you of the outcome of the NZSL@School service evaluation
- outlines development of the work programme agreed by the Ministry and Ko Taku Reo – Deaf Education New Zealand in response to the evaluation recommendations
- seeks your agreement to publish the Evaluation Report.

Summary

- NZSL@School is a service for Deaf or Hard of Hearing (DHH) ākonga whose primary language is New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL), and who use NZSL to access the New Zealand curriculum. The service is provided to around 170 ākonga enrolled in their local schools to raise the educational achievement and wellbeing of DHH ākonga to the equivalent of their hearing peers, and support the daily use and acquisition of NZSL in the school community.
- The NZSL@School service (the service) evaluation was conducted by independent evaluators (D&G Consulting Ltd.) in line with a Treasury requirement, confirmed through Budget 2018, that the service be evaluated.
- The evaluation found that prior to the merger the service was run as two distinct services, and that the merger has provided an opportunity to build on the strengths of the two approaches, informed by the findings of the evaluation.

- The evaluation found that the service played an important role in communicating Deaf culture within the school community, and in helping to dispel any stigma or misunderstanding associated with deafness. Ākonga and whānau reported that the service extended the NZSL fluency of ākonga and supported the use of NZSL by the education workforce.
- The evaluation also identified seven high level opportunities to improve the service.
- The Ministry of Education is working with Ko Taku Reo to develop an agreed plan of improvement actions in response to the findings of the evaluation.
- We propose that the Executive Summary of the evaluation report is published on the web in NZSL and English, and that the full copy of the report is published on the web in English.
- The evaluators will be invited to present the findings to the Ministry of Education's NZSL Sector Advisory Group (SAG) prior to the evaluation release.
- A copy of the evaluation report is included as Annex 1 to this Education Report.

Recommendations

Note that the evaluation of the NZSL@School service has been completed as required by the Treasury;

Noted

Note that the evaluation found that the service plays an important role in supporting equitable outcomes for ākonga using NZSL to access the curriculum;

Noted

Note that the evaluation found that there are opportunities to improve the service;

Noted

Note that the Ministry of Education is working with Ko Taku Reo to develop an agreed plan of improvement actions in response to the findings of the evaluation;

Noted

Note that we will provide you with six monthly updates on progressing improvements to the service as identified in the evaluation;

Noted

Agree that the Executive Summary of the NZSL@School evaluation report be published on the Ministry's website in NZSL and English;

Agree / Disagree

Agree that the full evaluation report is published on the web in English; and

Agree / Disagree

Agree that this Education Report will be proactively released with any information withheld in line with the provisions of the Official Information Act 1982.

Agree / Disagree



Dr David Wales
Poutohu Matua | National Director
Learning Support Delivery
Te Pae Aronui

14/06/2022



Hon Jan Tinetti
Associate Minister of Education

25/06/2022

Background

1. The NZSL@School service (the service) was established in 2014. The service provides access to New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) in education with the purpose of strengthening the use and frequency of NZSL by Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) ākonga who have NZSL as their primary means of communication.
2. Ko Taku Reo delivers the service nationwide to DHH ākonga enrolled in their local school. Prior to the establishment of Ko Taku Reo in July 2020, the service was delivered by Van Asch Deaf Education Centre and Kelston Deaf Education Centre.¹
3. As of July 2021, there were 173 ākonga supported by the service, with the majority being in the Wellington, Waikato, and Canterbury regions.
4. Baseline funding for the service has increased incrementally through funding from Budgets 2018 and 2019. The increase in funding through Budget 2019 was based on an estimated 15% increase in demand for the First Signs programme².
5. A further funding increase of \$2.959 million over four years has been provided for the service through Budget 2022. The funding is to maintain the NZSL@School service, ensure that the service can be offered to new students who learn in NZSL, and ensure that each student receives tailored supports in line with the findings of the NZSL@School evaluation.
6. Funding for the service is set out in Ko Taku Reo's annual Resourcing Notice. A supplementary 2022 Resourcing Notice will be drafted to account for the funding increase from Budget 2022.³ 9(2)(j)

Structure of NZSL@School service

7. The NZSL@School service is only available to DHH ākonga enrolled in their local school.
8. The Ministry's annual Resourcing Notice sets out the eligibility criteria for access to the service, objectives and intended outcomes for ākonga, and the role of Ko Taku Reo as the provider.
9. Ko Taku Reo currently uses a 2-tier support structure. Decisions on the tier of support provided to ākonga are made at the initial application for the service, then again at each annual re-application for the service:
 - a. **Tier 1** support provides additional funding for schools to employ a Communication Education Support Worker (CESW) or Educational Interpreter for the full school week. NZSL Tutor support is also provided. As of July 2021, 94 ākonga were being supported under Tier 1.
 - b. **Tier 2** support provides NZSL Tutor support but does not include funding for a CESW or Educational Interpreter to access the curriculum. As of July 2021, 79 ākonga were being supported under Tier 2.

¹ Ko Taku Reo is the national deaf specialist school that was established by the merger of the two DEC – Kelston DEC located in Auckland and van Asch DEC located in Christchurch.

² First Signs supports whānau and families of DHH children aged 0 - 5 to learn NZSL and support their development. Deaf Aotearoa is contracted to deliver First Signs since its development in 2014.

³ The Resourcing Notice is renewed every November or December of a calendar year.

Scope of the evaluation

10. The purpose of the evaluation was to evaluate the effectiveness of the service and identify opportunities for improvement to the service. This included gauging ākonga and whānau satisfaction of the service, access to the New Zealand Curriculum in NZSL, social and wellbeing outcomes for ākonga, and focus on outcomes for turi (deaf) Māori ākonga.
11. The evaluators used the stated purpose, service objectives and quality indicators in the annual Resourcing Notice and the National Education and Learning Priorities (the NELP)⁴ as frameworks for evaluating the effectiveness of the service.

Key evaluation findings

12. Overall, the evaluation found the service is effective in supporting ākonga enrolled in their local schools, but that there are a range of opportunities for service improvement.
13. The evaluation found that prior to the 2020 merger of van Asch and Kelston Deaf Education Centres the service was run as two distinct services, and that the merger has provided an opportunity and mandate to build on the strengths of the two approaches to develop one integrated service, as informed by the evaluation findings.
14. The evaluation found that the service is valued by ākonga and their whanau, with evaluation participants feeling that the service played an important role in communicating Deaf culture and extending the NZSL fluency of ākonga.
15. The evaluation found that the budget allocation for the service is focused on allocating as high a proportion of funding as possible to support services, either directly or through enrolling schools.
16. The evaluation found a number of opportunities to strengthen systems and structures within Ko Taku Reo to support the effective operation of the service, reduce inconsistency of delivery of the service across regions, provide greater consistency across the roles and responsibilities of staff providing the service, and allow greater whānau involvement in the level and type of service provided.
17. The evaluation identified seven high level opportunities to improve the service. They include:
 - a. Strengthening the NZSL@School application processes.
 - Review the need for annual re-application for the service and streamline the initial application and re-application process as a means of lessening burden for parents, whānau and schools.
 - Streamline the web-based information provided by Ko Taku Reo to clarify the application process for whānau and schools.
 - b. Streamlining the allocation process and increase transparency with schools and whānau.
 - 9(2)(f)(iv) [REDACTED]

⁴ <https://www.education.govt.nz/our-work/overall-strategies-and-policies/the-statement-of-national-education-and-learning-priorities-nelp-and-the-tertiary-education-strategy-tes/>

- c. Review the suitability of the two-tier allocation model with a view to tailoring services to individual ākonga need.
- d. Providing clarity and consistency across the roles and responsibilities of Ko Taku Reo staff within the NZSL@School service.
 - Defining the functions provided to schools and the supports provided to ākonga by Resource Teachers Deaf (RTDs), particularly where RTDs act as a support between whānau and schools, and where the RTD role can overlap with kaiako, CESWs and Educational Interpreters.
- e. Strengthening ākonga learning and monitoring progress.
 - Align the service's reporting requirements as stated in the annual Resourcing Notice with the annual Ko Taku Reo Milestone reports.
- f. Strengthening Deaf culture and practice in schools and kura.
 - Provide classroom teachers working directly with DHH ākonga access to NZSL Professional Learning Development (made available through Budget 2022).
- g. Strengthening the position of tikanga Māori and commitment to te Tiriti o Waitangi.
 - There are opportunities to deliver the curriculum in te reo Māori and progress philosophies and pedagogies to support outcomes for turi (deaf) Māori ākonga.
- h. Strengthening professional development and provision of resources to support staff.
 - Training to retain skilled staff to potentially transition with DHH ākonga.
 - Further develop the Educational Interpreter role.

18. The Evaluation Report has been reviewed and accepted by Ko Taku Reo.

Next Steps

- 19. The Ministry of Education is working with Ko Taku Reo to develop an agreed plan of improvement actions in response to the findings of the evaluation.
- 20. We will provide you with six monthly progress updates on the agreed actions to improve the NZSL@School service.

Annexes

Annex 1: Copy of the Evaluation of the NZSL@School Service: July 2021

EVALUATION OF THE NZSL@SCHOOL SERVICE

31 JULY 2021



PREPARED FOR: MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

PREPARED BY: D & G CONSULTING

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of the NZSL@School service (NZSL@School) is to strengthen the provision of New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) ākonga whose primary language is NZSL. It has been funded by the Ministry of Education since 2014 and purchased from Ko Taku Reo since its inception in Term 3, 2020.

This evaluation was commissioned by the Ministry of Education and completed by independent external evaluators. It seeks to summarise the current state of NZSL@School and identify strengths, gaps, and areas for improvement. This evaluation examines feedback from the perspectives of multiple stakeholders, including staff at Ko Taku Reo and various service providers who work within the NZSL@School framework, ākonga who are DHH, parents and whānau of DHH ākonga, kaiako with DHH ākonga in their learning environments, and Tumuaki and SENCOs who oversee learning support within their schools.

This evaluation primarily uses the following as its reference for evaluating effectiveness and impact:

1. The stated purpose, service objectives and quality indicators in the Ministry of Education's annual resourcing notice to Ko Taku Reo; and
2. The National Education and Learning Priorities (the NELP).

Prior to Ko Taku Reo opening in Term 3, 2020, NZSL@School was provided by both van Asch and Kelston Deaf Education Centres in their respective regions, with a degree of coordination and moderation across the two. As Ko Taku Reo is in a current state of change, some feedback from participants may cover things that Ko Taku Reo are already in the process of implementing.

The Structure of NZSL@School

According to the 2021 Resourcing Notice, to be eligible for NZSL@School children/young people should meet the following criteria:

- Students who are DHH and
- who are enrolled in a mainstream school, kura kaupapa, Māori medium school, or a specialist school other than Ko Taku Reo, and
- whose primary language is NZSL i.e. they use NZSL on a daily, ongoing basis at home, and in their school community.

For the purpose of this evaluation, the business processes of NZSL@School are summarised in a swim lane diagram (refer to page 14). This diagram is intended to show who is responsible for what at each stage in the process. It includes how applications are made, allocation decisions are made, staff are hired and assigned to DHH ākonga, service is delivered and regularly reviewed. The horizontal "lanes" show the different responsibilities and the columns show the different stages along which the service operates. Arrows indicate movement along the service and how different people interact with one another. Dotted lines also show the process of subsequent reapplications which occur annually.

The different steps in the service (the columns) are headings in this evaluation to summarise stakeholder feedback and make recommendations.

The diagram shows that DHH ākonga are allocated support based on whether they are tier 1 or tier 2. A tier 1 allocation means that NZSL@School provides additional top-up funding for schools to employ a Communication Education Support Worker (CESW) or Educational Interpreter and NZSL Tutor support is also provided. This is to allow interpreting access for learners who require NZSL to access learning. A tier 2 allocation means DHH learners receive NZSL Tutor support without requiring a CESW or Educational Interpreter for access to the curriculum.

At the time of the evaluation, Ko Taku Reo had 94 tier 1 ākonga and 79 at tier 2 across New Zealand. The service includes support from CESWs, Educational Interpreters, and NZSL Tutors. CESW hours are generated through ORS verification for ORS ākonga, but NZSL@School ensures that CESWs are funded for adequate time with DHH learners, and in most cases, this is full time support. RTDs are part of a separate service provided by Ko Taku Reo, but play a role in assisting CESWs, Educational Interpreters, kaiako and ākonga as part of the NZSL@School programme. At the time of evaluation, there are approximately 85+ CESWs, 9 Educational Interpreters and 22 NZSL Tutors.

Evaluation methodology

Desktop analysis was carried out on a range of documents and spreadsheets provided by Ko Taku Reo. Stakeholder data was gathered from two primary sources: an online survey and semi-structured interviews. Feedback was sought from the following stakeholder groups:

- DHH ākonga (those currently receiving NZSL@School as well as some former NZSL@School ākonga);
- Parents and whānau of DHH ākonga;
- Kaiako and other learning support staff who work directly with DHH ākonga;
- Tumuaki and SENCOS responsible for learning support within schools; and
- Individuals who work within the NZSL@School framework.

Participants were recruited through the e-mail addresses provided by Ko Taku Reo. A link to the online survey was included in e-mails, and participants were informed that could take part in an interview as well as, or instead of, the survey. Interviews were made available face-to-face or via Zoom. The survey was made available in NZSL and interpreters were available for interviews.

Parents/whānau were requested to provide the information to their children, and were advised that they may need to support their child to participate depending on age. Ākonga surveys were also available in NZSL.

Participants

In total, there were 226 responses to the evaluation (survey and interview) across the stakeholder groups. This included 31 parents, 23 DHH ākonga, 29 kaiako, 43 Principals / SENCOS, and 99 people who work within the NZSL@School system (CESWs, Educational Interpreters, RTDs, NZSL Tutors and Team Leads).

Findings

The findings are summarised below. Seven high-level opportunities to strengthen service provision have been identified. For further explanation including potential actions to address each of these high-level opportunities, please refer to the relevant sections.

Application

Initial applications for NZSL@School are completed at the end of the year. RTDs or AODCs are usually responsible for this. Prior to starting school, ākonga may not yet have been assigned an RTD in which case the AODC is responsible for completing the application. The work with whānau of DHH ākonga and their (prospective) schools to complete the application. ORS funding status of ākonga is not usually known at the time applications are made thus those applying for tier 1 do not know how many hours of communication support they need to apply for.

Eligibility information for NZSL@School funding can be inconsistent across resources thus educators and parents / whānau may benefit from greater clarity and consistency in the eligibility criteria. Raised awareness of the NZSL@School service may also be beneficial to assist in connecting DHH ākonga to NZSL@School and providing parents and whānau with ample information. This would ensure that DHH ākonga do not go 'under the radar'.

Participants showed frustration in needing to reapply for NZSL@School each year. Ko Taku Reo confirmed that reapplications are usually successful, but parents/whānau are not assured that they will be accepted. Streamlining this process may improve efficiency and reduce frustration.

Additional support hours for co-curricular or other school events are applied for at the time of the annual application. These can also be applied for by schools on an ad-hoc basis throughout the year. Applications must be made to KTR prior to the event taking place and cannot be made in hindsight. Some participants were concerned that events can arise unexpectedly and require NZSL interpreting. Without funding for interpreting, ākonga may not attend, or may attend but not have interpretation, or the school provides interpreting support but is not reimbursed. Some ability to apply for approval post-hoc may alleviate these issues and assist in providing a seamless service for ākonga, families and schools.

Opportunities for improvement

1. Opportunity to strengthen NZSL@School knowledge and application process

Allocation

Allocating ākonga to tier 1 or tier 2 levels of service is the responsibility of mostly one person at Ko Taku Reo as a committee has not yet been appointed following the merger.

While the tier 1 and tier 2 binary system is intended to allocate support based on the NZSL needs of ākonga, it may not adequately cover the complexities of learning for DHH ākonga. A review of this system may ensure provision more closely aligns with differing DHH ākonga needs.

Whānau are currently not included in the decision-making processes to determine what level of service is provided. To more closely align with Quality Indicator 5 of the Resourcing Notice (All parties are appropriately involved in decision processes and kept fully informed), whānau could be included in co-development of service allocation.

There is currently a lack of transparency about how the allocation process is carried out, and the allocation criteria that are used, which has caused frustration and a degree of suspicion among some stakeholders. Suggestions were also made by participants about how the application process could be streamlined, such as by removing the annual reapplication process, and simplifying how additional support is applied for.

Some participants were also frustrated in communication with NZSL@School, in particular, knowing who to contact for various things and getting timely correspondence. Having a point of contact for parents and whānau is recommended to improve communication with NZSL@School.

Opportunities for improvement:

2. Opportunity to streamline the allocation process and increase transparency with schools and whānau

Implementation

Implementation covers the relevant staff allocated to DHH ākonga and the systems of support put in place. The swim-lane diagram shows the different people allocated to DHH ākonga under tier 1 and tier 2. Both tiers are allocated an NZSL Tutor. Tier 1 ākonga may have the school hire a CESW or Ko Taku Reo source and contract an Educational Interpreter, or a combination of both a CESW (hired by school) and supplementary Educational Interpreter (sourced by Ko Taku Reo or the school).

Because schools hire CESWs, Ko Taku Reo do not have jurisdiction over them, which has proven problematic in some cases where CESWs have not had a high level of NZSL. Having guidelines from Ko Taku Reo may assist schools in recruiting CESWs with the necessary skills and abilities to work with DHH ākonga. This could involve assessing potential CESW's level of NZSL as schools may not be equipped to gauge fluency or interpreting proficiency.

Ko Taku Reo are responsible for sourcing and contracting Educational Interpreters in most cases. With this, there have been several identified contractual issues. Largely, these surround remuneration, travel, preparation time, and available resources. These stressors are exacerbated by the fact that educational interpreting is very different to community interpreting. Ko Taku Reo could consider directly employing Educational Interpreters rather than contracting them.

Clear guidelines on the Educational Interpreter role may benefit these staff through providing operational role clarity. This would cover their responsibilities for facilitating curriculum access, managing ākonga behaviour and engagement, facilitating social interactions, and what resources they should have access to within a school.

Opportunities for improvement:

3. Opportunity to provide clarity and consistency across the roles and responsibilities of staff providing NZSL@School

Service Delivery

At the service delivery stage DHH ākonga receive interpreting and other services from NZSL@School. The tracking of learning and progress may be strengthened through clarifying

the responsibilities of local schools and Ko Taku Reo in tracking such data. This would provide both with oversight of how DHH ākonga are progressing in their learning.

PLD for CESWs and Educational Interpreters in the pedagogy of language acceleration may be beneficial as the language capabilities of DHH ākonga are mixed and some come from a background of language deprivation.

A large component of feedback from participants surrounded cultural responsiveness in terms of Deaf culture. These participants largely felt that NZSL@School played an important role in communicating Deaf culture and that this practice could be strengthened. A review of Deaf culture in the NZSL@School framework may be beneficial in ensuring that NZSL@School aligns with Deaf values and that DHH ākonga are supported to achieve through NZSL, Deaf Identity and Deaf Culture.

Tikanga Māori and commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi was another important component of culture raised by participants. This includes how Māori concepts and Tikanga Māori are reflected in the service. Working with whānau, iwi, and hapū may help facilitate conversations around how the NZSL@School service can better align with Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

Opportunities for improvement:

4. Opportunity to strengthen ākonga learning and progress tracking
5. Opportunity to strengthen Deaf culture in schools and in practice
6. Opportunity to strengthen the position of Tikanga Māori and Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Review / Monitoring

The final stage of the Business Process is the active monitoring and review that Ko Taku Reo engages in. Additional needs in service provision are identified and reported to Ko Taku Reo and this may result in adjustments to services and/or funding.

As there is no formal Educational Interpreter qualification in New Zealand, the Educational Interpreter role has largely been operationalised by schools, ākonga and family/whānau within the terms of the contract with Ko Taku Reo. Professional guidance would assist in clearly defining the parameters and expectations on the responsibilities of the Educational Interpreter and CESW roles. This may be particularly helpful for those coming from more generalised roles.

Some participants perceive a lack of professional learning in areas such as working in educational settings and improving NZSL capabilities. Assessing professional learning needs across regions may be able to be performed by one or more people within Ko Taku Reo under a new specialised role.

Opportunities for improvement:

7. Opportunity to strengthen professional development and staff resources

Conclusion

The NZSL@School service provides a range of services to eligible ākonga, which are based on identified ākonga needs. The budget allocation for these services is provision-heavy, with a focus on allocating as high a proportion as possible of funding to support services, either directly or through enrolling schools.

The merger of van Asch and Kelston Deaf Education Centres has provided an opportunity for Ko Taku Reo to reassess how NZSL@School has been structured and delivered in the past, and a range of changes are either planned or partway through implementation.

The findings of this evaluation provide a strong mandate for the strengthening of systems and structures within Ko Taku Reo to support the effective oversight of the service, as well as the investment of resources to grow the service's sustainability and lessen inconsistency and reinvention.

There is also a strong mandate for better realigning the purpose of NZSL@School with priority 2 of the NELP, and to emphasise the strengthening of NZSL as a vehicle for strengthening ākonga culture and identity, as well as a vehicle for increasing educational achievement.



INTRODUCTION

The Purpose of the NZSL@School Evaluation

The purpose of the NZSL@School service (NZSL@School) is to strengthen the provision of New Zealand Sign Language (NZSL) for Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DHH) ākonga whose primary language is NZSL, to strengthen the delivery of the curriculum in NZSL and the use and frequency of NZSL by these ākonga.

NZSL@School is funded by the Ministry of Education through Ko Taku Reo. Between the inception of the service in 2014 and the merger of Kelston Deaf Education Centre and van Asch Deaf Education Centre, NZSL@School was purchased from both Deaf Education Centres.

The current evaluation is a routine evaluation commissioned by the Ministry of Education and contracted to external evaluators. It seeks to summarise the current state of NZSL@School and identify strengths, gaps, and areas for improvement. This evaluation examines feedback from the perspectives of multiple stakeholders, including staff at Ko Taku Reo and various service providers who work within the NZSL@School framework, ākonga who are DHH, parents and whānau of DHH ākonga, kaiako with DHH ākonga in their learning environments, and Tumuaiki and SENCOs who oversee learning support within their schools.

The evaluation assessed how NZSL@School fits within Deaf education in Aotearoa considering the priorities and functions of the Ministry of Education. This will gauge how NZSL@School is currently providing for DHH ākonga and whānau, but also how it can change and improve to better reflect the identified needs of Deaf learners, their whānau and their enrolling schools.

Ko Taku Reo, the National provider of education services for DHH children will also be discussed throughout this report. NZSL@School is one of several offerings for DHH ākonga provided by Ko Taku Reo and other services including First Signs, the Southern Cochlear Implant Programme, Deaf Children New Zealand Tamariki Turi O Aotearoa, and Deaf Aotearoa.⁵ The full range of funded supports work collectively and holistically to support the development of NZSL, culture, community, and identity. This array of services work as a holistic system to deliver education tailored to the varying needs of ākonga.

Broadly, the budget is allocated to five main uses:

1. Teacher Aide / Communication Education Support Worker funding – for ORS verified ākonga with allocated CESW hours or other ākonga with Special Education Grant support, Ko Taku Reo ‘tops up’ the number of hours to a full-time school week. For ākonga with no allocated hours, Ko Taku Reo funds a full-time CESW. These individuals are employed by the enrolling schools.
2. Educational Interpreter – generally for older ākonga with a higher level of NZSL fluency, Ko Taku Reo funds a part-time or full-time (depending on need) Educational Interpreter.
3. NZSL Tutors – may be allocated in conjunction with a CESW or Educational Interpreter or as a standalone service.

⁵ Descriptions of these services and links to their websites can be found at <https://www.education.govt.nz/school/student-support/special-education/supporting-children-who-are-deaf-and-hard-of-hearing/#Advisers>

4. Service Infrastructure – a comparatively small proportion of the budget is committed to Ko Taku Reo staffing and travel costs to oversee and administer applications, allocations and monitoring.
5. Unallocated funding – the full budget is not allocated at the beginning of a calendar year to allow flexible allocation during the year as needs emerge. These may include:
 - a. Additional applications for support
 - b. Ad-hoc requests for an interpreter for existing ākonga, for events such as assemblies, camps etc, where these were not known and applied for in the original application.
 - c. 'Moving' of ākonga from Tier 2 to Tier 1 support.
 - d. Development of additional roles within Ko Taku Reo to support NZSL@School service provision.

Ko Taku Reo is responsible for the approving the applications for the NZSL@School service and making allocation decisions on a budget outlined in the annual Resourcing Notice (approximately \$3.5m for the 2021 school year). The Resourcing Notice outlines the following quality indicators:

1. NZSL@School is available to all eligible students;
2. Students transitioning into schools are allocated NZSL@School resources well in advance of their transition to support effective transitions;
3. A seamless service is provided for students, families and schools;
4. A register is maintained which identifies for each eligible student:
 - Support team and the contribution of each
 - Learning needs and the desirable supports and services
 - Current provision of supports and services
 - Levels of NZSL proficiency and fluency
 - Learning and wellbeing outcomes achieved;
5. All parties are appropriately involved in decision processes and kept fully informed;
6. Suitably skilled people are employed to provide the required services.

National Education and Learning Priorities

The National Education and Learning Priorities (NELP) delineate Government priorities for education that will ensure the success and wellbeing of all learners. This provides a useful framework upon which to assess services such as NZSL@School and determine whether its processes and the service provided align with national priorities.

The NELP has 5 objectives:

1. Learners at the centre
2. Barrier-free access
3. Quality teaching and leadership
4. Future of learning and work
5. World-class inclusive public education

Within these five objectives, there are a total of 8 priorities which include ensuring learning places are safe and inclusive, having high aspirations for all ākonga, partner with whānau and communities, reducing barriers to education, ensuring all ākonga gain foundation skills, meaningfully incorporating te reo Māori and tikanga Māori, developing and strengthening

teaching and leadership, and collaborating with industries and employers to strengthen pathways to succeed in work.⁶

Applying this framework to DHH in particular, it should be expected that:

- DHH ākonga are not discriminated against, and they and their families and communities are supported with adequate Deaf education that responds to their needs, and sustains their identities, languages and cultures as Deaf people;
- DHH ākonga and their families and schools are able to access the necessary resources and staff to access education in NZSL;
- Te reo Māori and tikanga Māori are incorporated into Deaf education provision;
- Staff and leaders within Deaf education are supported to strengthen their language and cultural capabilities in providing access to NZSL; and
- DHH ākonga are given the necessary preparation to succeed in further education and work pathways.

⁶ A detailed explanation of the NELP and a table delineating the objectives and priorities can be found at <https://www.education.govt.nz/our-work/overall-strategies-and-policies/the-statement-of-national-education-and-learning-priorities-nelp-and-the-tertiary-education-strategy-tes/>

THE STRUCTURE OF NZSL@SCHOOL

NZSL@School is a service funded by the Ministry of Education that was launched in 2014 to strengthen the provision of NZSL for DHH ākonga whose primary language is NZSL. It provides daily access to NZSL at school to strengthen the use and frequency of NZSL.

According to the Ko Taku Reo educators' website,⁷ NZSL@School is available to ākonga:

- Who are DHH
- Who are enrolled in a mainstream school, Māori medium school, or a special education school (not Ko Taku Reo)
- Whose primary language is NZSL i.e. they use NZSL on a daily, ongoing basis at home, and in their school community
- Who are ORS verified and have been allocated ORS TA contribution from the Ministry of Education

The parent/whānau website⁸ and 2021 Resourcing Notice do not include the ORS verification criterion. Ko Taku Reo have indicated to the evaluators that ākonga do not need to have ORS funding, and can, in fact, receive funding for a CESW without allocated ORS CESW contribution. All ākonga who require NZSL to communicate and learn may apply and receive support at the tier 1 or tier 2 level. In most cases, ORS verification is confirmed after an application is made, thus ORS status is unable to be indicated on the application. Due to this timeline, Ko Taku Reo do not have up to date records of ORS verification for ākonga.

There is a disconnect between the Ko Taku Reo website and the Resourcing Notice, and it is not clear how someone could easily find clarity.

The business processes of NZSL@School are summarised in Figure 1 overleaf in a swimlane diagram. This diagram is intended to show who is responsible for what at each stage in the process. This outlines the channels through which applications are made, ākonga are allocated services, and the services operate. The swimlane diagram shows horizontal "lanes" for the different responsibilities and columns for the different steps along which the service operates. Arrows indicate movement along the service as well as how different people interact with one another.

The different steps in service (the columns) will be used as headings in this evaluation to discuss the feedback received from various stakeholders.

As this evaluation took place in the first half of 2021 it is important to note that current context within which the NZSL@School service is operating. Ko Taku Reo, the national entity overseeing NZSL@School, has been operating since 1st July 2020 following a merger of van Asch Deaf Education Centre in Christchurch and Kelston Deaf Education Centre in Auckland who both previously provided NZSL@School in their respective regions with a degree of coordination and moderation across the two. Mergers such as this cause significant disruption, and this is exacerbated by the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic and associated lockdowns. This merger also offers an opportunity for positive transformative change as processes and systems are in a state of flux.

This evaluation departs from a standard context in which an evaluation is conducted in that the post-merger environment means that a number of changes to the structure and operation

⁷ This is found at <https://www.kotakureo.school.nz/educators/nzsl-school>

⁸ This is found at <https://www.kotakureo.school.nz/parents-and-whanau/services/nzsl-school>

are already under consideration and implementation. It is important, then, to understand that the recommendations given in this evaluation were reached partly in response to feedback gathered from participants, who may or may not have knowledge about planned or partially implemented changes to the service.



NZSL@School Business Processes

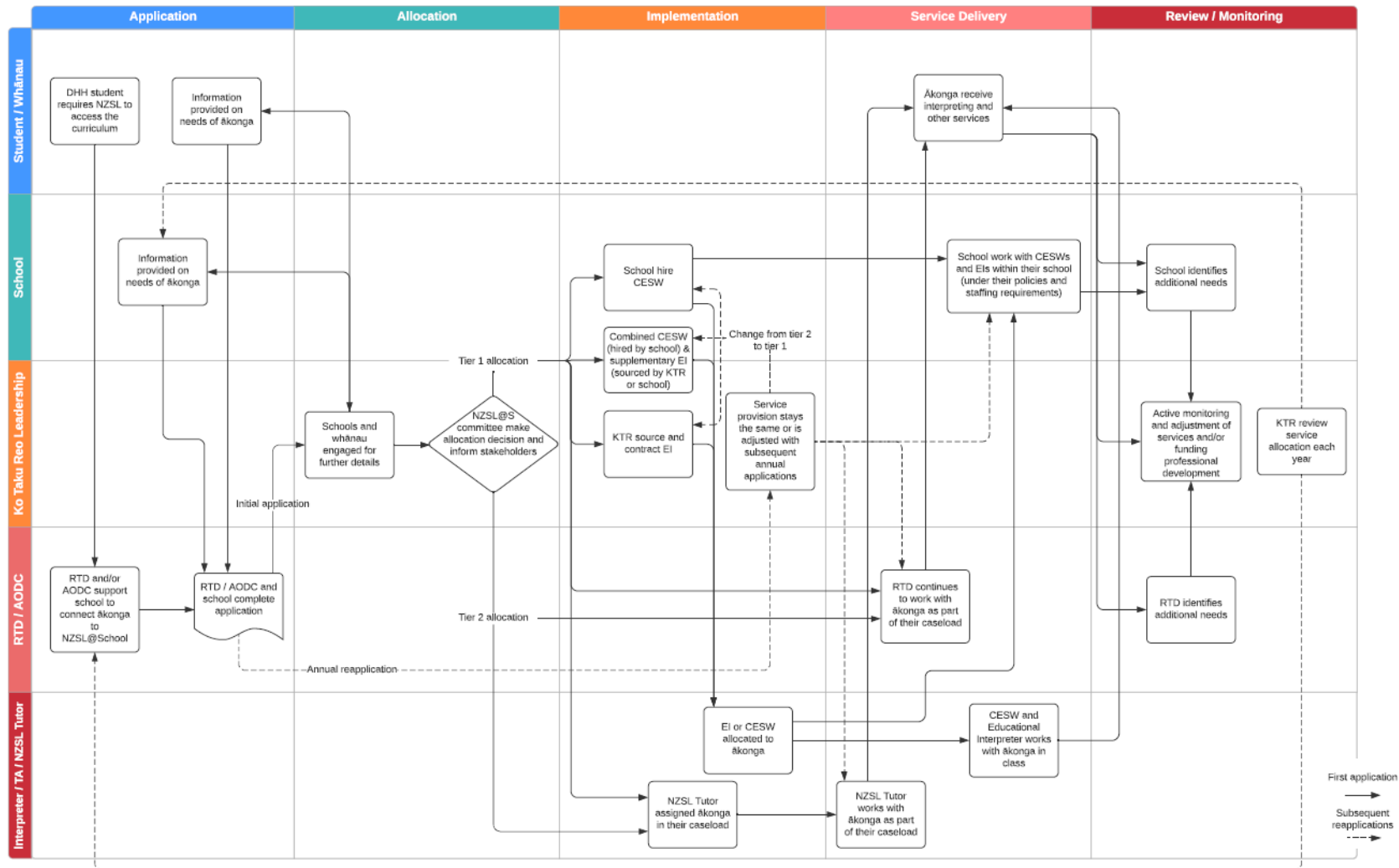


Figure 1: Swimlane diagram of NZSL@School Business Processes.

There are two levels of learning support need that determine the types of support provided. As shown in the diagram, when an allocation decision is made, the tier determines what people provide learning support. **Tier 1** means that NZSL@School provides additional top-up funding for schools to employ a CESW or Educational Interpreter for the full school week and NZSL Tutor support is also provided. **Tier 2** are those DHH learners who receive NZSL Tutor support without requiring a CESW or Educational Interpreter for access to the curriculum.

The tier system is designed to allow for DHH ākonga to have some access to NZSL, even if it is possibly not their primary face-to-face language. It allows for access to NZSL for DHH learners who would benefit from NZSL but do not require a CESW or Educational Interpreter to access learning. This provides the necessary support for a wide range of ākonga including those with close relationships with people in the Deaf community, those who have (or could have) deteriorating hearing, those whose access to oral language is lost without a device such as a cochlear implant, among others.

This also strengthens NZSL as a language and cultural artefact in its own right, rather than using it exclusively as a tool for those who cannot communicate through oral language. It increases awareness of NZSL and Deaf culture, opens social opportunities for DHH people, and allows for the linguistic growth of learners. It provides options for DHH ākonga who may adapt their language as they grow older.

While this binary system considers the individual needs of ākonga to assign them either tier 1 or tier 2 service, the system itself can be somewhat rigid in that it assigns ākonga to two broad levels of service, and may not consistently differentiate ākonga needs or account for changing needs over time (aside from moving from tier 2 to tier 1). Ko Taku Reo engage in ongoing review and monitoring and make service adjustments as issues arise, however, the tier system may not fully capture the spectrum of needs that arise.

At the time of writing this report, Ko Taku Reo has 94 tier 1 ākonga and 79 tier 2. Table 1 overleaf shows the regions these ākonga are from. Regions are in alphabetical order. One did not have a region indicated in their file and they were listed as receiving schooling at home through Te Kura Correspondence School.

Table 1: Regions of tier 1 and tier 2 ākonga.

Region	Number of tier 1	Number of tier 2
Auckland	7	10
Bay of Plenty	8	1
Canterbury	13	17
Gisborne	0	1
Hawke's Bay	9	0
Kāpiti Coast	1	0
Lower Hutt	5	0
Manawatu	3	8
Nelson	0	4
Northland	7	3
Otago	8	7
Porirua	1	0
Southland	5	7
Taranaki	0	3
Waikato	17	6
Wellington	9	11
West Coast	1	0
Unknown	0	1
Total	94	79

The NZSL@School service includes support from CESWs, Educational Interpreters, and NZSL Tutors. While CESW hours are generated through ORS verification for ORS ākonga, the NZSL@School service ensures that CESWs are funded for adequate time with DHH learners (in most cases, this is full time). RTDs are part of a separate Ko Taku Reo funded support but play a role in providing assistance to CESWs, Educational Interpreters, kaiako and ākonga as part of the NZSL@School programme. CESWs, Educational Interpreters, and NZSL Tutors are covered through the NZSL@School funding stream with other roles covered through other funding streams. CESWs are employed by schools and in some cases, there may be more than one CESW per ākonga. There are approximately 85+ CESWs, 9 Educational Interpreters, and 22 NZSL Tutors.

METHODOLOGY

A detailed methodology is included as Appendix 1 of this report.

The remainder of this report will assess the data gathered during this evaluation. Desktop analysis was carried out on a range of documents and spreadsheets provided by Ko Taku Reo. Stakeholder data was gathered from two primary sources: an online survey and semi-structured interviews. Different online surveys were produced for different stakeholder groups, and potential participants were provided with the survey link relevant to them.

Feedback was sought from the following stakeholder groups:

- DHH ākonga (those currently receiving NZSL@School as well as some former NZSL@School ākonga);
- Parents and whānau of DHH ākonga;
- Kaiako and other learning support staff who work directly with DHH ākonga;
- Tumuaki and SENCOs responsible for learning support within schools; and
- Individuals who work within the NZSL@School framework.

Participants were recruited through the e-mail addresses provided by Ko Taku Reo. E-mails included a link to the online survey and also invited participants to book an interview through return e-mail.

The online survey was primarily administered via SurveyMonkey, however an NZSL version of the survey was also available on Google Forms and had questions translated into NZSL and allowed participants to record their responses in NZSL. The survey included background information on the evaluation process, asked various demographic questions, then asked quantitative and qualitative questions around the service and how it provides for DHH ākonga and whānau.

Semi-structured interviews were largely conducted via Zoom, however, some interviews were available in person in Christchurch, Wellington, Hamilton, Te Kauwhata and Huntly. Interviews were done in a way that focused on the purpose of the evaluation but allowed participants to speak freely of their experiences and their priorities. Participants were asked if an NZSL or other interpreter was required, and these interpreters were provided with questions prior to the interview. All participants were asked to provide consent to be being recorded. If a child was interviewed, a caregiver was present at all times.

Quotes from participants are included throughout this evaluation with indications of where a quote has been translated from NZSL to written English.

Participants

A detailed breakdown of the participants who participated in this evaluation is included in Annex 2. Feedback was received from a range of stakeholders across both the surveys and interviews. This included 31 parents, 23 DHH ākonga, 29 kaiako, 43 Principals / SENCOs, and 99 people who work within the NZSL@School system (CESWs, Educational Interpreters, RTDs, NZSL Tutors and Team Leads). Participants were largely connected with tier 1 level support rather than tier 2.

APPLICATION

This section discusses the application stage of the NZSL@School service with reference to the swimlane diagram in Figure 1. At this stage, Advisers on Deaf Children (AODCs) and RTDs support a school to connect ākonga to the NZSL@School service. When starting school (at age 5), ākonga may not yet have been assigned an RTD, in which event an AODC is responsible for completing the application.

Both RTDs and AODCs work with whānau of DHH ākonga and their (prospective) schools to complete the NZSL@School application. The educators' section of the website states that it is the school that applies for support, and that *"One or more people can be involved in filling out the form; the school, AODC, RTD, Ko Taku Reo Team Lead plus input from the family/whanau can be included."*

This stage also includes reapplication for NZSL@School services, which occurs annually. Reapplications are considered by the same people within KTR, thus they already have an understanding of the DHH ākonga and their backgrounds on which to base these allocation decisions.

Initial Applications

Applications for NZSL@School are completed at the end of the year. At this time, RTDs / AODCs and schools are not yet aware of the ākonga's ORS funding status, and thus those applying for tier 1 do not know how many hours of communication support they need. Because of this, it is difficult to determine what level of service people requested vs. what they were allocated. In the event that ORS funding is known and a school applies for hours less than the 25 hours they could claim, Ko Taku Reo follow these cases up to discuss why they did not request full-time support. In many cases, Ko Taku Reo will provide more hours of NZSL@School support than what applicants initially indicated. Ko Taku Reo believe this may be due to schools asking for less than what they are entitled to under the belief that they will be more likely to be accepted this way, but this assumption has not been verified.

If additional support will be required outside school hours or for specific events, this is specified in the application also. Examples of this include assemblies and school camps.

As RTDs are involved in the application process, they are usually aware of whether a student needs tier 1 or tier 2 support for learning. When ākonga are young and starting school, it may not yet be known whether tier 1 or tier 2 is best for them. Ko Taku Reo indicated that there have been fewer than five cases in recent years where ākonga were allocated tier 2 when they applied for tier 1. This is usually due to confusion in the application process.

1. Opportunity to strengthen NZSL@School knowledge and application process
Eligibility for NZSL@School funding should be clarified and consistent across the Resourcing Notice, online information for parents/whānau and educators, and the enrolment form.

As discussed previously, eligibility for NZSL@School is defined across the Ko Taku Reo online information, the 2021 Resourcing Notice, and the application form. The Ko Taku Reo educators' website, however, states that NZSL@School additional top-up funds are available to learners who are ORS verified and have been allocated ORS CESW contribution from the MOE, despite other sources not including this criterion. This could cause confusion for those checking eligibility of their child or ākonga.

The NZSL@School service could be promoted within schools and early learning services to increase awareness, particularly for parents of DHH children.

AODCs and RTDs are largely responsible for connecting ākonga to NZSL@School. Learning support staff, in particular SENCOs, play important roles in connecting ākonga to the necessary programmes and initiatives such as NZSL@School to ensure accessibility to the curriculum. This, however, does not assure that every family with a DHH child is connected to the services they require, particularly if a DHH child is going ‘under the radar’ and has an unidentified hearing loss.

“That that boils down to the advice that RTDs and advisors on deaf children for who are from the Ministry of Ed, what advice are they giving to parents?” [NZSL@School provider]

The information on the NZSL@School web page is less extensive on the Ko Taku Reo website compared to what was provided on the Van Asch Deaf Education Centre and Kelston Deaf Education Centre websites. More extensive information may assist schools and parents / whānau in seeking information and connecting ākonga to the service.

Further Applications

The process of reapplication could be streamlined to ensure that schools and whānau are not left uncertain of their NZSL@School provision at the end of each school year.

Some parents discussed the frustration around needing to reapply for NZSL@School each year. While Ko Taku Reo confirmed that reapplications for current ākonga are usually successful, families cannot guarantee this and may spend the summer holidays unsure of whether they will be accepted. A re-look/streamlining of the re-application may improve efficiency and reduce frustration.

“So really, the issue has been ongoing for the last 10 years, to be really honest. And we, as parents, we’ve had enough of the funding applications every year that we have to fill out. They’ve been delayed. We don’t know when we’re going to hear when it’s been confirmed. Whether or not we’re allowed to... how much you’ll give to us. It’s, you know, always at the end of the year, which is not great, because you know, they were panicking throughout summer.” [Parent – Translated]

Develop clarity on schools’ responsibility to provide (and KTR’s responsibility to support) provision of NZSL support outside traditional schooling hours, and streamline the process for when this is applied for and whether it is administered by KTR or the school.

As mentioned previously, additional support hours for co-curricular or other school events are applied for at the time of the annual application. However, these can also be applied for by schools on an ad-hoc basis throughout the year as things arise which were unknown at the time of the application.

For reasons of oversight and budget allocation, applications must be made to KTR prior to the event taking place and cannot be made in hindsight. This makes sound operational sense from a budgeting perspective, and also encourages schools and individuals who are supporting ākonga to plan ahead.

However, some participants raised concerns that events or circumstances can arise unexpectedly, and that having to apply for support in advance can mean one of the following outcomes:

1. The ākonga does not receive the support and does not participate / attend

2. The ākonga does not receive the support and receives a lower level of accessibility during their attendance than they would have with interpretation support
3. The ākonga receives the support at the risk that the individual providing the support is not remunerated
4. The ākonga receives the support at the risk that the school is not reimbursed.

It would be beneficial if there were able to be some ability to apply for approval for additional support post-hoc. This would be challenging for KTR from a budgeting perspective so could either be enabled by developing clarity with schools what limited circumstances could qualify for post-hoc support, or by schools being directly provided with an annual budget for unexpected support costs at the outset of the school year.

Streamlining both the reapplication process and the process for additional support would better support Quality Indicator 3 (A seamless service is provided for students, families and schools).

ALLOCATION

At the allocation stage in the NZSL@School operations, Ko Taku Reo determine the DHH ākonga's needs and decide if they require tier 1 or tier 2 service. This requires further work with whānau as well as (in cases where applicable) engaging with the school to gather context around the DHH ākonga to best align the service to the needs. In terms of deciding allocations, whānau are not included in this process and an NZSL@School person / committee are solely responsible for determining the service requirements. As shown in Figure 1, the lanes for whānau and school do not include any actions in the allocation process.

2. Opportunity to streamline the allocation process and increase transparency with schools and whānau

Determining Allocations

The tier 1 and tier 2 system of offering differing levels of support should be reviewed to address complexities in DHH education, and clear eligibility criteria should be defined for each.

The tier 1 and tier 2 system of allocating support is based on the NZSL needs of ākonga. If they are using NZSL as their primary form of communication and learning, they receive tier 1 support which will provide them with a CESW (or an Educational Interpreter) and other support they may need, such as having an NZSL Tutor. Ākonga at tier 2 receive NZSL support, but this is not necessarily to interpret the curriculum as they are predominantly verbal.

This binary approach is designed to ensure that there are varying levels of support for ākonga, however, DHH education has many complexities that this system does not necessarily account for. This includes whether ākonga have hearing devices (such as cochlear implants) or whether they are entirely non-verbal and rely on NZSL for all communication.

A review of this binary system will allow for provision to be more closely aligned to the differing needs of DHH ākonga which may help address participant feedback that the level of support is not adequate for higher-level needs.

Rather than only 'gathering input' from parents/whānau in the application process (as per the application form), the service allocation should be co-developed between the parents/whānau, the ākonga (where age-appropriate), and the school.

Ākonga receive the NZSL@School service via an application. This is typically completed by an RTD (or an AODC prior to starting school) and sent to Ko Taku Reo for review. Some parents, however, have felt disenfranchised from the application process and wished to be further involved, as per priority 2 of the NELP - *...partner[ing] with their whānau and communities to design and deliver education that responds to their needs, and sustains their identities, languages and cultures.*

The educators' section of the Ko Taku Reo website states that the school applies for support and that *"One or more people can be involved in filling out the form; the school, AODC, RTD, Ko Taku Reo Team Lead plus input from the family/whānau can be included."* The term *input*, is not sufficient in meeting the aspirations of parents, or the mana of the ākonga involved in some cases, where their age and level of maturity would allow them to participate effectively in the application process. This would better meet Quality Indicator 5 of the Resourcing Notice (All parties are appropriately involved in decision processes and kept fully informed).

"Then there's that ridiculous application for can we have the funding next year, and here's why we need to justify that she needs the EI. So the poor SENCO would be saying, 'Hi, [name]', and we'd go through the whole thing. Yeah, so we hit an issue with that. And really,

we should have been filling in the form. It shouldn't have been a school-based form. The family should have had control of that. And we ended up kind of rewriting it for the SENCO and saying, Look, just submit this.” [Parent]

Processes and systems should be put in place to increase clarity and transparency about criteria and decision-making processes.

School-based participants and parents expressed frustration with what they perceived as a lack of transparency in the allocation process. In part, this is because the support is applied for by the local school and KTR, and may be supplementing support already received through ORS, Special Education Grant and other supports. Without transparent communication around allocation decisions, parents are unaware of the role of NZSL@School and how funding is allocated. Ko Taku Reo generally does not communicate directly with the parent, and some parents are unaware of the role of Ko Taku Reo in supporting their child(ren) through NZSL@School funding specifically.

This evaluation does not reach a conclusion on whether or not the allocation process itself is equitable and robust, as this is beyond the scope of the evaluation and is a matter for the subject matter experts within Ko Taku Reo to determine. However, it is apparent that where a lack of transparency exists, there are likely to be assumptions made by service applicants about robustness or equity in the process.

“I e-mailed and it was almost the end of the term by this stage. I asked why I hadn't been told. They were waiting for the school to fill out the form, to apply for the needs. I don't know what the school knows or anything like that, or what [ākonga] would need and how the school would know that... I'm like 'why can't you tell me?'” [Parent – Translated]

Some participants have been disappointed with the outcomes of applications, with some describing being tired of fighting for access.

“We have never had any services 'offered' to us, we have had to fight and demand services throughout! Our child needed access to a qualified NZSL interpreter full time in the mainstream school setting. This was hard fought for - never offered!” [Parent]

Some participants discussed the governance and management of the NZSL@School service. These comments focused on a lack of visible leadership from upper management of NZSL@School, and also the lack of Deaf representation in upper management. They stated that not having Deaf people in that upper management shows a lack of Deaf values and creates the sense of a glass ceiling through which Deaf people cannot achieve leadership and make meaningful change.

“For me, I think that having deaf leaders is very important, because by looking at the restructure, it's like a glass ceiling, like deaf people can only go so far. And then you have to magically become hearing to be put up into those management roles.” [Parent – Translated]

Ko Taku Reo needs to consider the processes and systems that can ensure applications and reapplications are well-managed, fair, timely, and transparent.

The application is currently considered by one person who may request additional support or input in some cases. While this individual has a high level of knowledge of the service, it creates succession-related risks where the majority of institutional knowledge and oversight is held by a single person. In the event this person is not available, Ko Taku Reo does not currently have a formal allocation process to determine what level of NZSL@School support different DHH ākonga needs.

Prior to the Van Asch / Kelston merger, each of the Deaf Education Centres made allocations through an NZSL@School Committee. A national committee has not yet been established by KTR, but this is intended.

A point of contact for parents/whānau and schools for NZSL@School should be created and clearly communicated to these stakeholders.

Communication between families / schools with Ko Taku Reo regarding the NZSL@School has not been favourable for some. This includes communication surrounding the teaching and learning that occurs as well as communication around applications and the support provided. Parents frequently reported not knowing who to go to for help, or who their contact person is when they need something.

“So it's been very confusing for everybody like, who is responsible for what part like the interpreters and other things as well. So that's why [father] and I have both been involved heavily with advocating for our children, and trying to speak to the school to set up meetings and organise those things about what's going on with the interpreters.” [Parent – Translated]

IMPLEMENTATION

At this stage, relevant staff are allocated to DHH ākonga and the systems of support are put in place to meet DHH ākonga needs at the tier 1 and tier 2 levels. Different organisations are responsible for appointing staff and the implications of this will be discussed.

The swimlane diagram in Figure 1 earlier shows that allocation occurs through two primary pathways. Students that are allocated tier 1 level of service require interpreting and access through NZSL through a CESW, Educational Interpreter, or both, as well as an NZSL Tutor. Students that are allocated tier 2 level of service have an NZSL Tutor assigned without requiring a CESW or Educational Interpreter for learning access. The swimlane diagram shows that a school hires a CESW, Ko Taku source and contract Educational Interpreters, or there is a combination of a school-hired CESW and supplementary Educational Interpreter sourced by Ko Taku Reo or the school or additional interpreting requirements (e.g. assemblies and extra-curricular activities).

Ākonga may also change from tier 1 to tier 2 and vice versa. More commonly, ākonga change from tier 2 to tier 1 as there are funds available to provide additional support to those who may benefit from it. This would indicate that in terms of the tier 1 and tier 2 allocation system, no ākonga are left without tier 1 or tier 2 support where an application is made. This is an evaluation rather than an audit, and so analysis and verification of allocation and expenditure of funds is out of scope.

3. Opportunity to provide clarity and consistency across the roles and responsibilities of staff providing NZSL@School

The subheadings below discuss some of the issues associated with staffing under the varying levels of support under tier 1 and tier 2. This includes having a CESW, Educational Interpreter, and/or NZSL Tutor and how these roles are hired/assigned.

Schools Hire CESWs

Ko Taku Reo could provide guidelines for how top-up funds or full-time funds are to be spent, specifying the skills and abilities that should be recruited for when recruiting Teacher Aides to perform a Communication Education Support Worker role, and offering support to assess language capability of potential CESWs if required.

Jurisdiction over CESWs

The first level of service under a tier 1 allocation is hiring a CESW. These are Teacher Aides hired by the school who work as CESWs under the NZSL@School network. A commonly reported problem with the appointment of CESWs is that Ko Taku Reo have no jurisdiction over these school hiring decisions or these staff. While Ko Taku Reo fund a large portion of these staff or in some cases, the entirety of funding, they have no oversight of who is employed and their NZSL capability. This can result in CESWs being employed to work with ākonga who have an inadequate level of NZSL. Ākonga language is then not being challenged or extended and the level of teaching does not necessarily match the curriculum content.

“I believe the hearing mainstreams schools shouldn’t be hiring people they like over people with nzsl skills. Someone from nzsl@school should provide expertise to make sure communicators are fit for purpose...” [Parent]

In many cases, the school is not well placed to accurately assess potential applicants’ ability to sign, either in terms of fluency or accuracy. This may mean that an ākonga is aware that their CESW is not providing adequate support but be unable to convey this to the kaiako.

Alternatively, it can mean that the ākonga 'does not know what they do not know'. Depending on their own level of NZSL, they may not be in a position to recognise their CESW's lack of capability.

It is again noted that different areas within New Zealand will have different workforce capability, and that access to NZSL-trained Teacher Aides can be a workforce challenge for many schools, however Quality Indicator 6 of the Resourcing Notice is that "suitably skilled people are employed to provide the required services", and it is apparent this is not always the case.

Ko Taku Reo Source and Contract Educational Interpreter

There are some identified contractual issues with Educational Interpreters. This is due to the Educational Interpreters being contracted by Ko Taku Reo, but then having their primary place of work being in a school, following school policies and with a school-based line manager. Ko Taku Reo identified that this system could change in the near future, but as the role is still relatively new, it is an ongoing learning process to identify how such issues can be remedied.

"And I do know that the interpreters the contract was not created by the NZSL at school programme at all... That's why the interpreters have to negotiate with Ko Taku Reo and Ko Taku Reo have to negotiate with a school about rights. Because some schools have no idea how the educational interpreters work. They don't know the boundaries, they don't know the rights. There's no contract there." [Parent – Translated]

The primary issues identified by the providers related to their pay, travel, preparation time, and resources.

- Remuneration: Remuneration is not comparable to a community interpretation setting.
- Travel: The amount paid for travel has reduced and does not match what a contractor would make in other settings.
- Preparation time: Educational Interpreters pointed out they are not paid for preparation time.
- Resources: Staff do not always have access to resources, including necessary technology to prepare work, look up words etc.

On the other hand, community interpretation work is seldom based on stable hours with no travel between interpretation bookings. Educational Interpretation work is based on, generally, a single client in a single location for a stable number of weekly hours. The argument could be made that external contractors generally get paid a higher hourly rate than the equivalent employee based on the unpredictable and unstable nature of their work.

CESWs working under NZSL@School providing support for DHH ākonga also stated that there is not enough allowance for preparation time. This includes learning high frequency words as well as preparing learning resources for ākonga to accompany what they are doing in class. They would like to see preparation included in contracted hours to address this. Some staff stated that they do preparation at home in their own time because they feel pressured to be able to cover things adequately. Potentially, it may be more appropriate to consider directly employing Educational Interpreters rather than an ongoing negotiation of individual contracts. It must be noted however, that the workforce is limited, which favours the contractor where demand is likely to exceed supply.

***Educational Interpreters would benefit from clear guidelines and support with training and development if needed when it comes to operational role clarity:
y. These guidelines should consider:***

- 1. The role of the Educational Interpreter in facilitating access to the curriculum, including the types of activities they may reasonably be expected to undertake**
- 2. The role of the Educational Interpreter in behaviour management and ākonga engagement**
- 3. Their role in facilitating the ability of the ākonga to be part of the social ecology of the classroom**
- 4. What resources and support an Educational Interpreter should have access to within a school**

Some Educational Interpreters also stated there can be ambiguity surrounding their roles as they are expected to teach ākonga (often one-on-one), teach NZSL, provide behavioural and emotional support, and do many other things which fall outside of the realm of interpreting. Participants working with Educational Interpreters often reported the same.

While they are expected to adhere to school policies, there can be significant associated stress with performing roles that one does not feel adequately qualified or capable in. As Educational Interpreters have generally not received formal qualifications in education, being expected to play a teaching role is a large undertaking and can result in feelings of pressure to succeed and inadequacy when expectations are not met.

There appear to be two main influencing factors in how the Educational Interpreters understand their role:

- The methodologies and approach to interpreting that an interpreter's training incorporated or emphasised
- The extent and tenure of experience in a community interpreting role

While these are generalisations across a limited sample, educational interpretation tends to require a more flexible and less restricted approach than community interpretation. In part depending on the interpreter's training and employment background, they tended to adapt to this more or less successfully.

Areas of contention included (and most applied to CESWs to a lesser extent):

1. The extent to which the interpreter should alter the message being interpreted to aid clarity, or provide additional explanation or examples;
2. The extent to which the interpreter should support the ākonga with work at times when there is no verbal message to be conveyed;
3. The extent to which the interpreter is responsible for ensuring the ākonga is paying attention to them, the kaiako and their learning;
4. The extent to which the interpreter is responsible for implementing behaviour management strategies;
5. The extent to which the interpreter should ethically disclose the content of ākonga conversations; and
6. The extent to which the interpreter should enable off-task communication if it allows for greater participation in the social ecology of the classroom.

The first four of the above are more intuitive to understand. As an explanation of the disclosure of ākonga conversations, some Educational Interpreters and CESWs had experienced conflict when asked to report to the kaiako either:

1. The content of their own conversation with the ākonga, particularly if the ākonga had said something intended for one-to-one communication and not for the kaiako or whole class to hear.
2. The content of discussion with another ākonga, particularly if it was off-task or unrelated to the content of the learning.

There was confusion between whether Educational Interpreters / CESWs should prioritise the communication desires of the ākonga over access to the curriculum. For example, if an ākonga wished to talk to another ākonga about their upcoming weekend plans, should the interpreter support this communication to occur, or redirect the ākonga to their learning?

If the kaiako asked for information about what was being discussed, there was confusion about what the Interpreter's responsibility is to disclose this, given that an equivalent pair of hearing ākonga whispering at the back of the room would invariably answer 'nothing' or the equivalent if asked by the kaiako what they were talking about.

In some cases, this caused discomfort or tension between the support worker and the ākonga, or the support worker and the kaiako. There was also potential for vicarious trauma for the support worker where the ākonga experienced a negative effect, particularly if it was due in part or in whole to the choices and actions of the support worker.

"The school made the rule that whenever the deaf student lifted their hands to talk, the interpreter must always act as an interpreter. You know, where you have a side conversation. I don't voice what you're signing, because I can see that is a whisper. When it was deemed that whatever the deaf student signed, the teacher needed to be conscious of it and make a decision as to whether it was important or not. [They] had a side conversation with a friend and poor [Interpreter], following the instructions, voiced what was said. For [ākonga], that was traumatic and she still talks about it, and she wrote me this email saying 'Mum, she told Mrs. Whatever, you know, I'd said this.' It was traumatising." [Parent]

Combined CESW & Supplementary Educational Interpreter Another possibility under tier 1 is that ākonga have a CESW with supplementary interpreting being provided by an Educational Interpreter. Commonly this would be a CESW providing support on a day-to-day basis, and an Educational Interpreter for particular events such as assemblies.

The Educational Interpreter may be sourced by the school or by Ko Taku Reo. Under this level of support, the issues and recommendations under the previous two subheadings apply, thus no new recommendations are made under this service combination.

SERVICE DELIVERY

At this stage, relevant individuals engage with DHH ākonga and provide access to learning through NZSL and strengthen the use and frequency of NZSL. This includes the work of CESWs, Educational Interpreters, RTDs (who are part of a separate service provided by Ko Taku Reo but continue to work with DHH ākonga who are receiving support from NZSL@School), and schools who oversee staff working within their school under their policies and staffing requirements.

The survey asked participants about the learning and language progress of DHH ākonga under NZSL@School. Some results and graphs surrounding this information is included in Appendix C of this report and may provide some background as to how DHH ākonga are developing in terms of their learning and language from the perspectives of multiple stakeholders.

3. Opportunity to strengthen ākonga learning and progress tracking

Learning progress

Ākonga learning and achievement tracking responsibilities across local schools and Ko Taku Reo should be clarified so that Ko Taku Reo have adequate oversight over DHH ākonga learning progress.

NZSL@School aims to strengthen the provision of NZSL for DHH ākonga and does so through providing daily access to NZSL at school to strengthen the use and frequency of NZSL. Ākonga learn NZSL through a variety of mechanisms not limited to having spoken teaching and instruction interpreted into NZSL.

Quality Indicator 4 in the Resourcing Notice indicates that levels of NZSL proficiency and fluency and learning and wellbeing outcomes are to be maintained in a register. As the reporting requirements were updated in the 2021 Resourcing Notice, some of the stakeholders and staff interviewed may not be aware of these reporting requirements.

Local schools, however, have a responsibility for tracking learning progress and achievement. While Ko Taku Reo have a responsibility for NZSL proficiency and fluency and learning and wellbeing outcomes in their Quality Indicators, clarification of learning and wellbeing tracking needs to be achieved to ensure that both parties have oversight of this information.

Language Development

PLD support for CESWs and Educational interpreters on the pedagogy of language acceleration may be very beneficial for NZSL@School providers, particularly in a context of previous language deprivation.

Participants were asked about how DHH ākonga language was developing due to NZSL@School. This question did not specify NZSL or English. Participants largely said that NZSL@School and access to NZSL had a positive effect on literacy and language development.

“...because [they] started school, being able to speak like two-word sentences like, ‘I eat’, or ‘me hungry’. And now [they] can, [they] can say sentences, in a mix of spoken and sign, language and sign.” [NZSL@School provider]

“My child has extended her language development positively.” [Parent]

Some participants discussed that NZSL@School has allowed them to communicate in a hearing world.

“It has given my child a voice in the deaf and hearing world.” [Parent]

Learning can be impeded by the late acquisition of language. For those who have their hearing level determined after some years, they have been years without any hearing or access to language. This means that when they join school, they are behind their hearing peers and need to spend time developing basic language capabilities.

“His language level is about four years old, because his listening level, his listening age, when he probably first got hearing aids at about five and a half. So his listening age, the time that he actually had consistent, good consistent, good access to sound has been about three years. And so he when he started school, there were lots of concerns because he wasn’t talking.” [NZSL@School provider]

Additional support for NZSL@School providers may be beneficial for helping staff work with DHH ākonga to advance their language capabilities, particularly in cases where ākonga have delayed language acquisition.

Cultural Responsiveness

Another component of the NZSL@School service delivery is the inclusion of culture in the provision, including Deaf culture, Māori Deaf, and other cultural considerations. Deaf culture in particular was discussed due to its relevance in how services such as NZSL@School operate in mainstream schools.

5. Opportunity to strengthen Deaf culture in schools and in practice

All relevant stakeholders, particularly those who are DHH, should be engaged in a review of the purpose and underlying philosophy of NZSL@School so that it explicitly recognises the role of language as supporting the development of culture and identity.

Without pre-empting the outcome of any such review, the following should be considered:

- How can the status of NZSL and NZSL@School support be expressed without reference or comparison to hearing-centric attitudes and systems?***
- How can it be ensured that DHH ākonga who have NZSL as their primary language are supported to achieve through NZSL, Deaf Identity and Deaf Culture?***

It is specified that one of the purposes of NZSL@School is to Support schools so that DHH ākonga who require NZSL to have *educational achievement and wellbeing to the equivalent or above the level of their hearing peers.*

Some hearing participants in this evaluation discussed one of the benefits of an increased capacity in NZSL is that it increases the ability of the ākonga to access written and spoken English, and therefore a curriculum being delivered (in a mainstream school) in either English or (in a kura kaupapa Māori) in Te Reo Māori. Others, however, pointed out that NZSL is a culture in and of itself, and culture is a major component of identity. They stated that NZSL is often viewed as a way of transmitting information coded into English from a hearing perspective, and this does not take account of a DHH ākonga as a culturally located individual in which their language contributes to their identity and their world view.

“They treated sign language as a tool. It's not a tool, it's a language. It's not a tool that helps, like hearing aids and cochlear implants, that is a tool that aids with sound. But sign language is not a tool. It's a language. And yes, it can help with learning English and the structure of English, like level one and level two... It's part of your identity, it's not a tool, it's part of their life.” [NZSL@School provider – Translated]

The Resourcing Notice purpose, service objectives and quality indicators are silent on the role of NZSL@School in celebrating and strengthening cultural identity, however, as above the purpose does state that the aim is “to raise or maintain these deaf students’ *“educational achievement and wellbeing* to the equivalent or above the level of their hearing peers.” According to priority 2 of the NELP - *...that responds to their needs and sustains their identities, languages and cultures*, aligning the purpose of NZSL@School with the culture of DHH learners would distinguish them from hearing peers and not compare their education achievement and wellbeing outcomes.

“Deaf learners accessing NZSL in schools need to be seen through the lens of culture not disability.” [Parent]

Many participants discussed Deaf culture. Largely, this feedback focused on raising the status of Deaf people, the pride of Deaf communities, and removing stigma and misunderstanding. Participants have discussed the importance of introducing Deaf culture and normalising it within schools and communities.

“It has been important to make NZSL visible in the children's school. For them to feel confident to be able to communicate with someone in NZSL in their school as mostly it's all in spoken English. It's really important to us that the children feel their culture is valued and is visible at school.” [Principal / SENCO]

When asked about the benefits of NZSL@School, the most frequently referenced theme by kaiako, principals and SENCOs was support for Deaf culture. This has involved schools and school staff learning more about what it means to have DHH ākonga in their learning environments and how to cater to their needs in a culturally respectful way. For many, having DHH ākonga has been navigating uncharted waters, and support in Deaf culture has been very necessary in integrating DHH ākonga into the school. NZSL has been normalised in many schools with other ākonga and staff starting to use NZSL more frequently.

“Having a TA who uses it with the whole class means he's in an environment where those around him understand and accept his language and they are learning to also use it with him so he doesn't see it as something that makes him different, he sees it as the norm in his class.” [Parent]

6. Opportunity to strengthen the position of Tikanga Māori and commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Māori Deaf⁹ Perspective

Input from Māori Deaf should be considered in the structure of the NZSL@School service, and implement recommendations that would make delivery of the service more responsive to Māori Deaf ākonga.

⁹ It is important to note that the Te Reo Māori ‘Turi Māori’ may not be how all people who are both Māori and Deaf identify. For some, they identify as Māori first and Deaf second. Based on the emphasis of this section, Māori Deaf has been used.

Ko Taku Reo to engage with kura kaupapa Māori and other Māori immersion schooling providers to understand potential barriers to ākonga in these settings being eligible for, knowledgeable of, or applying for NZSL @School support.

Some participants discussed culture in terms of Te Ao Māori and gave feedback as Māori Deaf.

These participants perceived there not to be a lot of NZSL support around Tikanga Māori. Concepts such as community, manaakitanga, and whanaungatanga are extremely important to help Māori ākonga to connect to and express their culture as Māori Deaf. Working with Māori Deaf, with whānau, iwi, and hapū enables conversations around Māori Deaf education and facilitating positive change in line with New Zealand's commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi.

“They don’t have a lot around Tikanga Māori, developing or understanding Māori concepts. I want to see and I want them to receive Māori sign concepts and that gets fed to them. I think it’s important that they grow in their knowledge of their Māoritanga. Māori Deaf need to have a connection with their whānau, their family. Sometimes, the family have no idea how to communicate with the Tamariki.” [NZSL@School provider – Translated]

Some staff with Māori Deaf ākonga try to incorporate te reo and Tikanga Māori into their practice to help their ākonga connect to their culture. Some parents gave feedback that te reo Māori is being underutilised and they believe it would enhance the cultural responsiveness of NZSL@School.

“...it would be even more positive if they were able to speak and understand Te Reo Māori.” [Parent]

Providing education to Māori Deaf requires examining philosophies and pedagogies of both Deaf education and Māori education. NZSL@School support is available to students in kura kaupapa Māori but at the present time only one student enrolled at a kura kaupapa Māori is receiving either Tier 1 or 2 NZSL@School support. Given the disproportionate overrepresentation of being Deaf or hard of hearing for Māori, it seems likely this is an underrepresentation.

“How does Māori education work for tamariki? Can we incorporate sign language there as well as a way to support Māori Deaf tamariki. Do we put our tamariki into kura Kaupapa and support the kura Kaupapa with New Zealand Sign Language? There’s many options and many different ways of doing that.” [NZSL@School provider – Translated]

REVIEW / MONITORING

The final stage in the NZSL@School Business Process shows the active monitoring that Ko Taku Reo engage in, as well as the ways that schools and RTDs identify additional needs and report this to Ko Taku Reo. This can result in Ko Taku Reo adjusting the services and/or funding and providing targeted professional development outside the annual reapplication and allocation process.

This stage also shows that Ko Taku Reo review service allocation each year, and these dotted lines in Figure 1 lead back to the application stage.

Professional Learning and Development

7. Opportunity to strengthen professional development and staff resources

A professional support network / virtual community of practice for NZSL providers should be considered.

It is important to note that there is not an Educational Interpreter qualification within New Zealand, although some participants reported having had support from Educational Interpreters with an overseas qualification specific to educational interpreting. As such, it has largely fallen to the interpreter, the school, the ākonga and the family/whānau to construct how the role works in operation, within the terms of the contract with Ko Taku Reo.

Professional guidance from Ko Taku Reo and RTDs would allow for clear parameters and expectations on the roles and responsibilities of Educational Interpreters and CESWs to be in place. This will allow for greater consistency in quality practice, particularly for those who have come from more generalised teacher aide work or community interpreting who may be less familiar of what it means to work with DHH ākonga in schools.

Roles could be established to be responsible for assessing professional learning needs across the regions and providing targeted support to NZSL@School providers.

Lack of Professional Learning

Staff who work with DHH ākonga feel that there has not been adequate professional learning. Often, people who are accustomed to interpreting do not know how to work in educational settings and how to convey and explain information. Contrarily, some staff who are experienced educators have poor NZSL ability and require professional development in their language capabilities.

"I think it's not just a matter of giving the TA some skills and New Zealand sign language has also given them some understanding of the education process. And so I mean, some of the TAs are brilliant, but some of them have got very little understanding about the educational journey for a child." [NZSL@S provider]

As ākonga increase in year level, the NZSL requirements increase as people interpreting need to be able to communicate complex topics, and the ākonga generally has a higher level of fluency. This is particularly true at the NCEA level. Professional learning needs to be available for CESWs and Els to cope with increased vocabulary required later in their educational journeys.

Ko Taku Reo have indicated that professional learning will be better supported as new leadership roles are created, which is something they are in the process of doing. This means there will be staff available to assess the professional learning needs in different regions and deliver that professional learning when and where it is needed.

CONCLUSION

The NZSL@School service provides a range of services to eligible ākonga, which are based on identified ākonga needs. The budget allocation for these services is provision-heavy, with a focus on allocating as high a proportion as possible of funding to support services, either directly or through enrolling schools.

The merger of van Asch and Kelston Deaf Education Centres has provided an opportunity for Ko Taku Reo to reassess how NZSL@School has been structured and delivered in the past, and a range of changes are either planned or partway through implementation.

The findings of this evaluation provide a strong mandate for the strengthening of systems and structures within Ko Taku Reo to support the effective oversight of the service, as well as the investment of resources to grow the service's sustainability and lessen inconsistency and reinvention.

There is also a strong mandate for better realigning the purpose of NZSL@School with priority 2 of the NELP, and to emphasise the strengthening of NZSL as a vehicle for strengthening ākonga culture and identity, as well as a vehicle for increasing educational achievement.

7 high-level opportunities to strengthen the NZSL@School service were identified:

1. Opportunity to strengthen NZSL@School knowledge and application process
2. Opportunity to streamline the allocation process and increase transparency with schools and whānau
3. Opportunity to provide clarity and consistency across the roles and responsibilities of staff providing NZSL@School
4. Opportunity to strengthen ākonga learning and progress tracking
5. Opportunity to strengthen Deaf culture in schools and in practice
6. Opportunity to strengthen the position of Tikanga Māori and commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi
7. Opportunity to strengthen professional development and staff resources

Several responding actions were identified as potential steps to achieve meaningful change toward these opportunities. These are compiled in the following list:

- *Eligibility for NZSL@School funding should be clarified and consistent across the Resourcing Notice, online information for parents/whānau and educators, and the enrolment form.*
- *The NZSL@School service could be promoted within schools and early learning services to increase awareness, particularly for parents of DHH children.*
- *The process of reapplication could be streamlined to ensure that schools and whānau are not left uncertain of their NZSL@School provision at the end of each school year.*
- *Develop clarity on schools' responsibility to provide (and KTR's responsibility to support) provision of NZSL support outside traditional schooling hours, and streamline the process for when this is applied for and whether it is administered by KTR or the school.*
- *The tier 1 and tier 2 system of offering differing levels of support should be reviewed to address complexities in DHH education, and clear eligibility criteria should be defined for each.*

- *Rather than only 'gathering input' from parents/whānau in the application process, the service allocation should be co-developed between the parents/whānau, the ākonga (where age-appropriate), and the school.*
- *Processes and systems should be put in place to increase clarity and transparency about criteria and decision-making processes.*
- *Ko Taku Reo needs to consider the processes and systems that can ensure applications and reapplications are well-managed, fair, timely, and transparent.*
- *A point of contact for parents/whānau and schools for NZSL@School should be created and clearly communicated to these stakeholders.*
- *Ko Taku Reo could provide guidelines for how top-up funds or full-time funds are to be spent, specifying the skills and abilities that should be recruited for when recruiting Teacher Aides to perform a Communication Education Support Worker role, and offering support to assess language capability if required.*
- *Educational Interpreters would benefit from clear guidelines and support with training and development if needed when it comes to operational role clarity:*
 - a. *The role of the Educational Interpreter in facilitating access to the curriculum, including the types of activities they may reasonably be expected to undertake*
 - b. *The role of the Educational Interpreter in behaviour management and ākonga engagement*
 - c. *Their role in facilitating the ability of the ākonga to be part of the social ecology of the classroom*
 - d. *What resources and support an Educational Interpreter should have access to within a school*
- *Ākonga learning and achievement tracking responsibilities across local schools and Ko Taku Reo should be clarified so that Ko Taku Reo have adequate oversight over DHH ākonga learning progress.*
- *PLD support for CESWs and Educational interpreters on the pedagogy of language acceleration may be very beneficial for NZSL@School providers, particularly in a context of previous language deprivation.*
- *All relevant stakeholders, particularly those who are DHH, should be engaged in a review of the purpose and underlying philosophy of NZSL@School so that it explicitly recognises the role of language as supporting the development of culture and identity. Without pre-empting the outcome of any such review, the following should be considered:*
 - a. *How can the status of NZSL and NZSL@School support be expressed without reference or comparison to hearing-centric attitudes and systems?*
 - b. *How can it be ensured that DHH ākonga who have NZSL as their primary language are supported to achieve through NZSL, Deaf Identity and Deaf Culture?*
- *Input from Māori Deaf should be considered in the structure of the NZSL@School service, and implement recommendations that would make delivery of the service more responsive to Māori Deaf ākonga.*
- *Ko Taku Reo to engage with kura kaupapa Māori and other Māori immersion schooling providers to understand potential barriers to ākonga in these settings being eligible for, knowledgeable of, or applying for NZSL@School support.*
- *A professional support network / virtual community of practice for NZSL providers should be considered.*

- *Roles could be established to be responsible for assessing professional learning needs across the regions and providing targeted support to NZSL @School providers.*

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Appendix A: Detailed Methodology

Recruitment

Participants were recruited through e-mail if they were on Ko Taku Reo records. A link to the online survey was included in e-mails, and participants were informed that could take part in an interview as well as, or instead of, the survey. Interviews were made available face-to-face or via Zoom.

Relevant staff at Ko Taku Reo (RTDs, Team Leads, NZSL Tutors) were contacted directly via e-mail, as were Educational Interpreters. Communications were specific to their role. A link to the relevant survey was included, and participants were encouraged to get in touch to schedule an interview.

School principals were contacted via e-mail, and they were asked to forward the e-mail to staff who work directly with the DHH ākonga (SENCOs, kaiako, CESWs etc.). SENCOs were also emailed directly if their contact information was included in Ko Taku Reo records. The e-mail contained links to the Principal / SENCO survey, the kaiako survey, and the funded staff survey (for Teacher Aides / CESWs). Information was also provided about how to schedule an interview.

Parents/whānau were provided with an email in both written English and NZSL, as well as three options for participating in the survey:

1. Written response to survey in written English
2. Written response to survey in NZSL
3. NZSL response to survey in NZSL

Parents/whānau were requested to provide the information to their children, and were advised that they may need to support their child to participate depending on age. Ākonga surveys were available with the same response options as above for parents/whānau.

In booking interviews with participants, all were asked if an interpreter for NZSL, te reo Māori or other languages would be required and these were provided based on participant's wishes.

Online Survey

Online written English surveys were delivered using SurveyMonkey. They were administered to parents / whānau, ākonga, kaiako, principals / SENCOs, and NZSL@School providers.

NZSL@School providers refers to those staff who work within the NZSL@School framework, including RTDs and Team Leads who do not receive funds specifically from NZSL@School but are often supporting NZSL@School ākonga.

The NZSL version of the survey for DHH parents/whānau and ākonga was delivered on Google Forms. Each question was translated in NZSL with embedded YouTube videos, and if participants wanted to respond in NZSL, a link was given to a website that allowed them to input the question number and record their signed response. This could then be translated into written English by an NZSL interpreter and included in the other data analysis.

The surveys all provided introductory information on the background and purpose of the evaluation. Participants were informed that they did not have to answer any question they did not want to or did not know the answer to. They were also told that they would stay anonymous and confidential, and that the information they provide will not be used in a way that can be attributed back to them. By clicking 'next', they confirmed that they consent to having their feedback used in reporting for this evaluation.

The first section of the surveys included background information, including relationships to the DHH child(ren), their ages/year levels, and other types of needs such as additional learning or sensory needs that they are aware of. Ākonga were also asked to identify their gender and ethnicity. Parents/whānau were asked for details around their children's hearing, including the use of assistive devices. They were reminded that they did not have to provide answers if they preferred not to.

Participants were then asked about what types of services are offered, including the people who assist ākonga, families, and schools such as CESWs, Resource Teachers of the Deaf, Educational Interpreters, NZSL Tutors, or other people who communicate in NZSL with DHH ākonga. They were asked details on how long this service has been provided for, how they were connected to these services, whether provision changes or stays the same, whether they spend enough time with these individuals, and whether these individuals are available when needed. Participants were also asked to describe how these people work with ākonga/families/schools.

Questions around learning asked participants to describe how DHH ākonga are developing in their learning and in their language development, and how having NZSL@School has supported this development.

The largest component of the survey focused on perceptions of the quality of service provided. Participants were asked about how the service has benefitted them, their family, and their school, and what recommendations they would make to improve the service's accessibility and effectiveness. Participants were also asked about how the service responds to culture, and this deliberately did not specify Deaf culture or ethnicity or otherwise, to allow participants to interpret the question and answer accordingly.

At the conclusion of the survey, participants were asked if they had any further feedback they would like to provide. They were then thanked for their participation.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Those who replied to the e-mail communication stating they would like an interview were asked about availability and whether they needed an interpreter. The majority of interviews were conducted via Zoom, with face-to-face interviews taking place in Christchurch, Auckland, Wellington, Hamilton, Huntly and Te Kauwhata. Interpreters were provided with the interview questions prior to the interview to support their preparedness.

Interviews started with briefly building rapport, then the purpose of the evaluation was outlined to participants. The interviewer assured the participant that they could speak openly and freely about their experiences and talk about specific cases and situations as the reporting would not include any identifying information. They were asked for their consent to having the conversation recorded (audio and/or video) for transcription purposes.

Interviews were semi-structured in nature, thus assessed the same things but encouraged and explored in more depth the topics that were seen as being of greatest importance and interest to the participant. It also allowed for follow-up questions and for participants to discuss their own experiences and cases. In some cases, participants had prepared their own agendas for providing feedback, and the interview allowed them to communicate their points and have their feedback recorded.

At the conclusion of the interview, participants were asked if they had any further feedback to give. They were then informed about how the information would be used (in a report to the Ministry of Education) and thanked for their time.

Where young children were included in an interview, a parent / caregiver was present at all times.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data, such as ratings of the service, was analysed using basic descriptive statistics and displayed in graphs. Narrative data (including open-response questions in the survey and narrative responses in the interviews) was analysed thematically. This was done inductively, meaning that there were no predetermined theories or frameworks to code the data, and instead themes were developed based on the content.

In the following sections of this evaluation, commonly referenced themes are discussed in terms of their content and example quotes are included. It should be noted that in many cases, the quotes are from DHH participants who communicated in NZSL during their interview, and thus in some cases the quotes are translations of NZSL into English. Where this has occurred, the sample quote will specify that it was translated.

Appendix B: Breakdown of Participants

Table 2 shows how many of each stakeholder group participated in the surveys and interviews. There is a possibility that some who took the survey also asked to be interviewed and vice versa.

Table 2: List of stakeholder groups.

Stakeholder group	Survey responses	Interviews
Parents / whānau	24	7
DHH ākonga	5	18
Kaiako	27	2
Principals / SENCOs	34	9
NZSL@S providers		
• CESW	24	15
• Educational Interpreter	4	6
• Resource Teacher of the Deaf	22	4
• NZSL Tutor	9	4
• Team Lead	1	4
• Other	2	4

Staff who play roles in the delivery of NZSL@School made up the largest group of participants. Ākonga made up the smallest portion of respondents, particularly in the online survey. This will largely be due to the age of children, but a proportionally higher number of ākonga participated in interviews. Other information about participants is broken down below.

All those who completed the parents / whānau survey were parents/primary caregivers, as were those who participated in the survey aside from two who did not specify in the survey. Of those 24 that participated in the online survey, 22 had children receiving tier 1 support and two had children receiving tier 2 support.

Ākonga who responded to the survey were all receiving tier 1 support and ranged from ages 5 to 19. There was one year 1, one year 3, one year 12, one year 13, and one 19-year-old (no applicable year level). Four were New Zealand European / Pākehā and one who was Māori. There were three females and one male (one did not answer their gender).

Parents were asked about their children's degree of hearing but also informed they could choose not to answer. In the surveys and the interviews, the most common response was bilateral sensorineural, severe to profound. 21 parents in the online surveys indicated that their child has one or two cochlear implants and 6 indicated that their child uses hearing aids. A range of degrees of hearing loss are represented in the sample, with a majority being a severe to profound degree of hearing loss with families opting to use devices.

Stakeholders were also asked about other needs that DHH ākonga have. These could include other learning or sensory needs. The commonly reported needs were:

- Developmental and cognitive delays
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Dyslexia
- Oral / verbal dyspraxia
- Physical needs and neuromuscular conditions

- ADHD
- Oppositional Defiance Disorder

Some other, less referenced needs include those surrounding sensory processing, Downs Syndrome, trisomy 21, 11q 24-25 Deletion Syndrome, blindness, lung disease, Cerebral Palsy, general behavioural needs, general health-related needs, emotional delays, CHARGE Syndrome, Gusher Syndrome, Kabuki Syndrome, and Treacher Collins Syndrome.

Of the 27 kaiako who participated in the online survey, responses indicate that 19 had tier 1 ākonga in their class, and 8 had tier 2 ākonga. Of the 34 Principals and SENCOs who participated in the online survey, responses showed 22 had tier 1 ākonga and 12 had tier 2 ākonga.

In the Principal / SENCO online survey, 12 were Principals / Tumuaki, 10 were Assistant / Deputy Principals, 10 were SENCOs, and 6 indicated 'other'. These included roles such as Head of Faculty Special Education, (Acting) HOD of Supported Learning, Head of Inclusive Learning, and specialist teacher.

Table 3 below shows the year levels of the ākonga that kaiako and Principals / SENCOs indicated are in their classes / schools. Every kaiako and Principal / SENCO answered this question with some having multiple DHH ākonga in their classes / schools (thus numbers in the table add more than the total number of kaiako and Principal / SENCO participants).

Table 3: Year levels of ākonga in kaiako classes.

Year level	Number of ākonga	Year level	Number of ākonga
1	6	8	2
2	2	9	2
3	4	10	1
4	2	11	4
5	0	12	3
6	3	13	0
7	1		

Appendix C: Background Data on DHH Ākonga Learning and Language Progression

Ākonga Learning

The surveys and interviews asked staff working under NZSL@School and kaiako about how they felt the DHH ākonga' learning was progressing academically compared to hearing peers. This was assessed on a 5-point scale where 1 = Much below, 3 = About the same, and 5 = Much above. These are shown in Figure 2 below. Rather than showing the raw numbers, percentages were calculated out of the numbers who answered the questions due to a different sample size in each group.

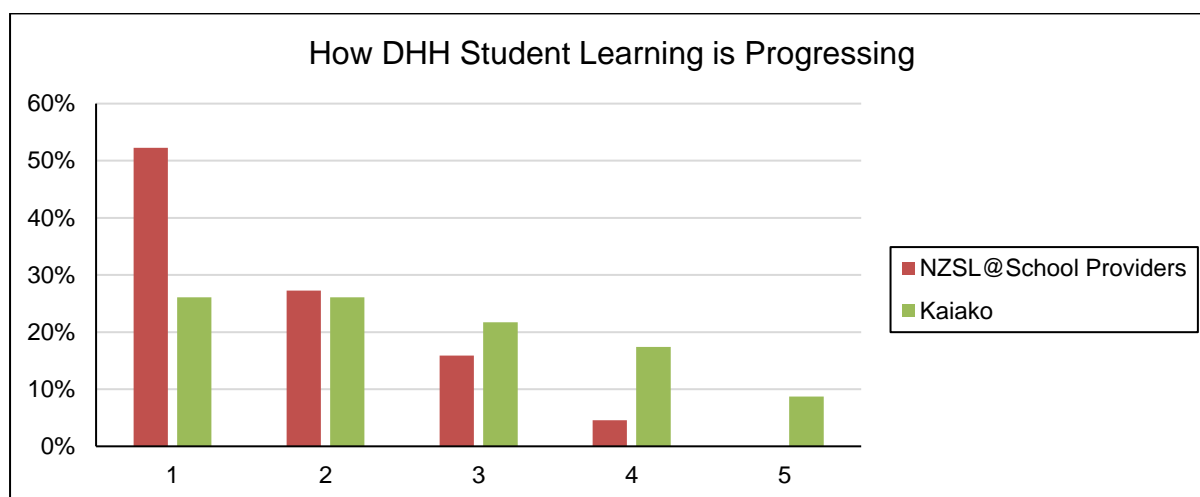


Figure 2: How Ko Taku Reo staff and kaiako believe DHH ākonga learning is progressing compared to hearing peers. NZSL@School provider $N = 44$, Mean = 1.7, kaiako $N = 23$, Mean = 2.3.

The figure shows two important features. Firstly, there was a tendency to give lower ratings which would indicate that a majority of DHH receiving NZSL@school support are not achieving at the same levels as their hearing peers. Secondly, a greater proportion of NZSL@School providers gave a lower score than kaiako. This could be due to kaiako having greater exposure to the more formal assessment results of all ākonga or could be because those working with the ākonga in NZSL are better able to assess the learning of ākonga compared to the classroom kaiako.

"I feel like she doesn't actually have a foundation in high school learning. I think learning is very difficult and she gets quite overwhelmed quite easily. I think you know, English is her second language. So it's very, it's quite overwhelming for her" [NZSL@School provider]

Ākonga learning can be limited when they aren't provided the right level of support. For example, when they don't have the right NZSL access for assessments.

"Yeah, really frustrated me. And there was a test at the end of the year, an exam. And I failed, and I didn't get any help. And I didn't understand. And I didn't learn anything." [Ākonga – Translated]

Ākonga Language Use

Ākonga were asked about what languages they mostly use at school, at home, and with their friends. This was assessed in the online survey using a 5-point scale where 1 = Not at all and 5 = All the time. A limited sample of 5 ākonga data was available through the online surveys.

These students largely used NZSL and written English to communicate at school, at home, and with friends. One student was verbal thus used mostly a combination of written and spoken English. NZSL was used less with friends in favour of written English. One participant stated they do not have peers to communicate with. Te Reo Māori was used by some ākonga to a small extent at school which may be due to the inclusion of te reo Māori in the New Zealand curriculum. Written English may also be used to a high degree at school due to the curriculum being reliant on the English language. As the curriculum is not available exclusively in NZSL, DHH ākonga require a degree of written English for learning and assessment.

This doesn't take into account that NZSL comes in different forms, and some ākonga and families indicated in the interviews that sign can be combined with gestures to communicate with people. It also does not consider how language use develops and changes over time and how some ākonga who rely on written / spoken English may change to use mostly NZSL (or vice versa) as they grow older and realise how they can express themselves more easily.

Time and Availability of NZSL@School Providers

Stakeholders were asked about the availability of NZSL@School providers when they are needed.. This was assessed on a 5-point scale where 1 = Never and 5 = Always. These averages are shown in Figure 3. Parents were not asked this question in the online survey as they would have less oversight of what was occurring in the classroom and whether it was meeting learning expectations.

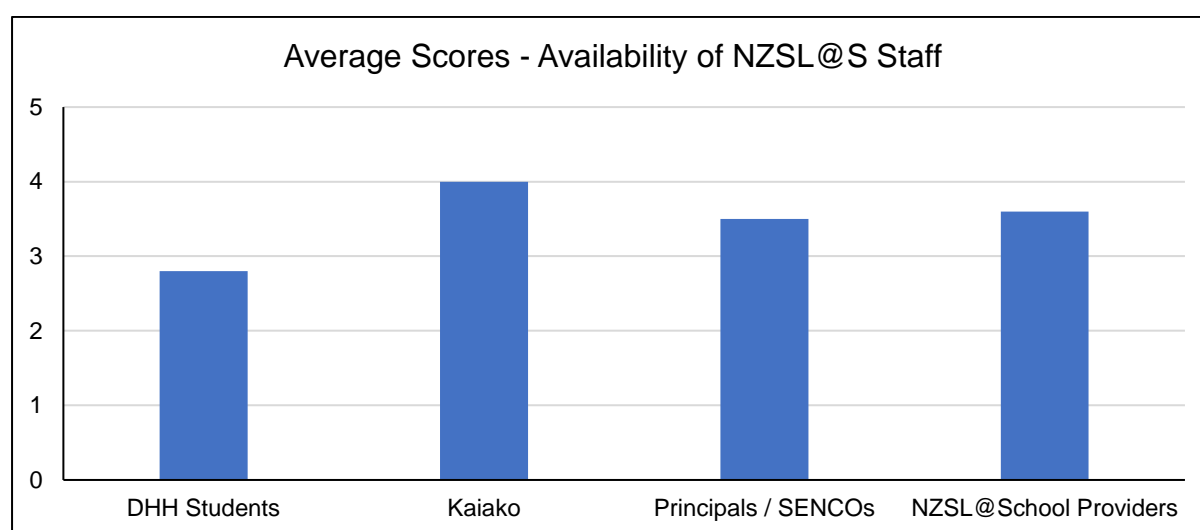


Figure 3: Average scores from stakeholders to whether NZSL@School providers are available when needed.

The figure shows some variability in results with DHH ākonga, on average, being less satisfied with the availability of the staff who provide support. This is partly due, however, to a small sample size of ākonga in the survey.

There was some feedback that when someone is not available, DHH ākonga are negatively impacted as they lose access to NZSL. Working remotely can also be an issue as ākonga do not have consistent ongoing access to staff who assist with NZSL.

“the Deaf learner has direct conversations with the Deaf tutor, when they are present, and then they are left isolated in the mainstream until the next visit from the tutor.” [Parent]

Similarly, stakeholders were asked about whether they felt that support staff spent enough time with DHH ākonga. The perspectives differ between stakeholder groups, i.e. NZSL@School providers will have different numbers of ākonga they work with, whereas a kaiako will see staff come and go and have good oversight of the overall support framework for ākonga learning.

Participants were asked whether they felt NZSL@School providers spent enough time with DHH ākonga, and this was measured on a 5-point scale where 1 = It is not enough time, 3 = It is about right, and 5 = It is too much time. Figure 4 below shows the average scores of DHH ākonga, parents, kaiako, Principals / SENCOs, and NZSL@School providers.

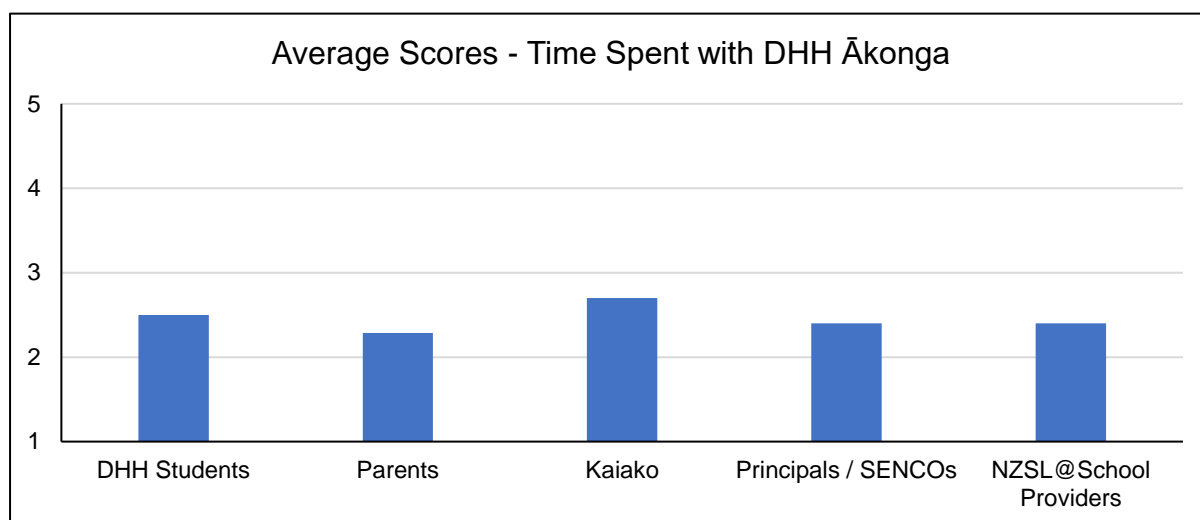


Figure 4: Average scores from stakeholders to whether NZSL@School providers spend enough time with DHH ākonga.

Across the surveys, participants gave very similar average scores. Scores of 3 are ideal as NZSL@School provider spend the right amount of time with ākonga. The averages fall below this number for all stakeholder groups, indicating that the overall perspective is that not enough time is spent. This may be influenced by the different roles of staff. For example, an NZSL Tutor who spends 1 hour per week may be perceived as not enough, even though a CESW spends 25 hours.

In the survey, a lack of time spent with the ākonga was frequently reported as a negative component of the service. This includes NZSL Tutors having a very limited amount of time that they can spend with DHH learners. This is not true for all participants, however.

“If we had full time support, then, you know, we wouldn’t have to prioritise which elements of [his] learning does he have full access to and which other parts with is still going to be barriers.” [Principal]

How NZSL@School Supports Learning

Participants in this evaluation were asked about how NZSL@School allows access to learning for DHH ākonga. This includes the things that NZSL@School providers do in their daily tasks to enrich learning and language development. These are briefly summarised below from most-to least-referenced. These themes were gathered from the people contributing information in surveys and interviews, thus it is expected that there is a high degree of overlap with other services for DHH ākonga, including those provided by Ko Taku Reo outside of the NZSL@School service.

Table 4 below shows the ways that NZSL@School allows access to learning. It specifies which components are unique to NZSL@School and which components are performed by NZSL@School providers but may also fall under other services such as the RTD service. CESWs and Educational Interpreters perform many of the activities of a traditional Teacher Aide. In many cases, having a CESW or Educational Interpreter assigned to a DHH ākonga means that they do not have a traditional Teacher Aide, thus the types of support a Teacher Aide would typically provide still need to be provided by these other roles.

Table 4: How NZSL@School allow access to learning for DHH ākonga.

Things that are specific to NZSL@School	Things that are general and applicable across other roles such as Teacher Aides and RTDs
Interpreting and providing access to NZSL	General teaching and learning support (CESWs also often support other ākonga and kaiako in their schools rather than work one-on-one)
Explaining concepts and addressing gaps in language (often due to deprivation in language)	Study / tutor sessions
Supporting ākonga to learn NZSL	Communication with parents / whānau about ākonga learning
Supporting kaiako and others to learn NZSL	Wellbeing and social support
Interpreting and providing support for assemblies, EOTC, and other extra-curricular and social activities)	Behavioural support (e.g. keeping ākonga on - task, behaving well)
Social ecology <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interpreting social interactions and background noise for ākonga • Interpreting during breaks and teaching social skills / norms (however most indicated that ākonga are independent during break times) 	Supporting ākonga agency and independency (learning to learn)
NZSL hubs and KIT days	

Kaiako were asked in the survey the extent to which they felt NZSL@School helped them understand and use NZSL themselves on a 5-point scale where 1 = Not at all and 5 = To a very high extent. The average score from kaiako was 4.1, indicating that, on average, kaiako have perceived NZSL@School to support their own learning and usage of NZSL. Supporting staff to learn and communicate in NZSL to a higher degree also aligns with priority 6 of NELP - *Develop staff to strengthen teaching, leadership and learner support capability across the education workforce.*

Working with families / whānau relates to priority 2 of NELP - *...partnering with their whānau and communities to design and deliver education that responds to their needs, and sustains their identities, languages and cultures.* It gives families/whānau oversight of the NZSL@School service and keeps them involved in NZSL learning and their child's education.

When Staff are Unavailable

The surveys and interviews asked what happens when key staff are unavailable. For example, when they are sick, on leave, undertaking PLD or facing other disruptions that take them away from the class environment. Participants largely had personal experiences to share in this area, including staff needing to leave for family reasons or sickness, and often there is no one

available to replace them. This results in many DHH ākonga not being able to learn or having a very limited capacity to learn.

“He basically would just turn up the school and sit in the corner and leave as soon as he could, because he wouldn’t have any engagement with anybody else.” [NZSL@School provider]

It can be very difficult to find relief for a DHH ākonga at short notice. In some cases, RTDs are able to provide relief for CESWs when they are sick or unavailable, but this is not a sustainable solution and nor does it provide full cover for the ākonga.

It was recommended that there be some support for finding adequate relief. Some also said that support over Zoom could work as a last resort. This would remove a barrier to access as it would mean that DHH ākonga can still learn when their primary CESW or Educational Interpreter is unavailable.