

SABBATICAL REPORT

Title: Using Bilingual Support Workers to Engage Migrant Communities

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Purpose:

A recent initiative from Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment (MBIE) via the Ministry of Education, has supported schools with large numbers of ESOL students to employ a Bilingual Support Worker (BSW) for 10 hours per week for one year. At present 50 positions are available annually.

The purpose of this sabbatical was to investigate the ways in which schools were using Bilingual Support Workers to encourage non-English speaking families within the school community to connect more fully and easily with the school. A secondary interest was to prepare a list of guidelines, suggestions and ideas to consider for schools that may employ a Bilingual Support Worker in future, in order to assist with transition into this role.

Key questions asked of participants centred on the innovative ways in which Bilingual Support Workers are being used in schools, particularly related to engaging parents, and identifying any barriers to the effectiveness of Bilingual Support Workers.

For ease of communication, Bilingual Support Workers are referred to as BSWs in this report.

Rationale and background information:

The number of students in New Zealand schools for whom English is a second language is increasing as New Zealand transitions from 'a largely bicultural milieu towards being more multicultural.' (Chile 2009).

Schools with long-standing and effective ESOL programmes are noticing changes in ESOL students' needs across a range of academic, social and cultural indicators. As Affagard-Edwards (2016) identifies, traditionally, support for ESOL learners has focused on academic success, though schools experienced in ESOL teaching and support have also identified the need to provide pastoral, social and emotional support. This has often taken place through counselling and/or parenting support. Affagard-Edwards (2016) states, 'The New Zealand education system places a greater emphasis on educational issues of minority populations and embraces diversity and different perspectives.'

ERO (2018) identifies that while schools' responses to observed needs such as first language maintenance have been in place for some time, there is anecdotal evidence of social/emotional and self-regulation needs becoming increasingly apparent for migrant students, and particularly for those from refugee backgrounds. Responding to these needs is all the more difficult when negotiating the difficulties of second language understanding.

ESOL students' need for assistance to understand the New Zealand education system is supported by the research of Hamilton et al (2000) which identifies that students from minority, migrant and refugee cultures frequently encounter learning difficulties arising from the mismatch between the pedagogical assumptions of the New Zealand classroom and student expectations of how instruction should be delivered.

While observed needs are increasing, changes to funding mechanisms for ESOL students, and especially those made to the Refugee Flexible Funding Pool in February 2019, are decreasing the actual amount of funding available to schools to provide support for specific ESOL students. (Lewis 2019).

In 2018 the Ministry of Education introduced a pilot programme providing funding to employ 50 Bilingual Support Workers (BSWs) as teacher-aide supports in schools across New Zealand. At recipient schools this has provided access to first language support for ESOL students and families that had not previously been possible. The author's school received funding to employ one BSW in 2018. With improved social and academic outcomes for ESOL students in mind, the school employed a second BSW from locally-raised funds at the same time, and has continued to fund two BSWs since.

One of the offshoots of the employment of BSWs is the opportunity to use them beyond the classroom to support improved communication with non-English speaking parents across a range of formal and informal settings. In 2018 staff at the author's school began to notice that parents from its Mandarin-speaking community were more likely to attend school and social events if they knew that the BSWs would be present. The PTA also began liaising with the BSWs for support in identifying ways to better engage the Mandarin-speaking community more effectively. From here grew the inquiry – which schools in the region were using BSWs and what 'lightbulb' moments had they experienced? The school became convinced that sharing their successes and hearing about those of other schools would support others to use their BSWs more effectively, experience greater gains in connecting with their community, and provide a wider support network for ESOL teams, particularly the BSWs themselves.

This sabbatical project provided the opportunity to investigate and discuss the experiences participant schools had with the employment of BSWs and to reflect on ways in which schools could improve their practice through collaboration with others. The idea of providing a bank of suggestions, innovations, ideas and precautions for schools who subsequently employ a BSW was also mooted as a means of creating a professional learning community for BSWs, either locally or regionally.

Procedure:

School visits

The author carried out visits to 11 schools in Southland, Canterbury and Auckland and had email communication with two others. These schools varied from deciles 2 to 9, in size from 84 to 612 and in setting from urban to rural. At each school, discussion took place with a variety of personnel including principals, deputy principals, ESOL teachers/coordinators, ESOL teacher aides, and Bilingual Support Workers.

The participants were invited to comment on strengths and innovations they had developed in the use of BSWs, any frustrations they had experienced related to the role, and any other related topics they wished to discuss. Questions were asked to clarify the roles BSWs undertook within the school, the professional learning opportunities undertaken, and opportunities to collaborate with other schools in the use of Bilingual Support Workers.

Agency liaison

To supplement the information available via school visits, the author met with two Senior Advisors: Migrant & Refugee Support from the Ministry of Education. The author also spoke with the lead of the Migrant, Refugee and International Education team. The opportunity to hear first hand about the implementation of the pilot programme, the administration involved behind the scenes, and the support offered, was pivotal to ensuring an entire picture was gained.

Additionally, the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment and Immigration New Zealand were contacted to identify information related to the funding stream from which funds for the programme were made available.

Findings:

Appointment of a Bilingual Support Worker

Applying for funding to provide a Bilingual Support Worker was described by one principal as ‘the easiest application for funding I’ve ever made.’ The Ministry of Education deliberately made the application process straightforward, a gesture that is appreciated by schools as it accelerates the appointment process.

During discussion with contributors to this study, a standard set of considerations for appointment of a BSW became readily apparent. Factors listed by contributors include:

- Fluency in the target language to eliminate the possibility of mistakes or misunderstandings in translation;
- Relationship skills which enable easy, respectful and positive interactions with all stakeholder groups;
- Knowledge of New Zealand culture;
- Knowledge of the New Zealand education system;
- Knowledge of the individual school is a significant advantage. For this reason, being a current or past parent at the school is useful;
- Commitment to and connection with the school’s vision and values, which BSWs will be modeling in the role;
- An open mindset to learning; and
- The ability to work collaboratively.

In addition to these criteria, several BSWs mentioned that it is helpful for the appointee to be a migrant themselves in order to have an understanding of the challenges faced by second language learners living in New Zealand.

All schools agree that finding someone who meets the majority of the criteria noted above is important. While acknowledging that looking to the school’s community in the first instance is preferred, several schools experienced difficulty in identifying someone who was a good fit for the position and were grateful for the recommendations of their local Ministry of Education Senior Advisor: Migrant & Refugee Support. These advisors have connections within the wider community and know of people who could be suitable for the BSW role. Schools spoke of one advisor in particular who went to extensive lengths to source possible candidates for schools.

Although most of the schools interviewed appointed someone who spoke the language of their largest migrant group, two Auckland schools had worked together to employ a BSW who spoke the language of their smallest minority language group in order to support a particular family who came from a traumatic background. There was no-one in either school community who spoke the same language as this family until a BSW was appointed. This collaboration enabled the family to experience consistent support across both schools (and a local early childhood centre) and to build enhanced relationships with each.

Collaboration is also evident in Piritahi Kāhui Ako in Blenheim, where three BSWs are shared between the schools, each speaking a different Pacific language.

The BSWs interviewed during this study commented positively on the benefits of the *Working with English Language Learners (WELLS)* professional learning they received when they were first appointed. Now that they have had some experience in their roles, they are eager to receive more professional learning, including repeating the *WELLS* modules. They believe that their improved understandings and increased knowledge would allow them to build on what they have learned and benefit more fully from this training. The Ministry of Education has indicated that schools can re-apply to participate in *WELLS* professional learning if they believe that their BSW would benefit from it.

Roles

In line with the Ministry of Education's purpose for the Bilingual Support Worker role, each school was using the BSW as a teacher aide/learning assistant within the school. Supplementary to this, schools had evolved other roles for BSWs in response to the needs of students, staff and school community. These additional roles included:

Interpreting	- learning conferences, enrolment meetings, parent information meetings, pastoral meetings, etc.
Translating	- primarily notices sent home and information booklets for families, school website information, etc.
Community liaison	- attending meetings, home visits, family support meetings, PTA meetings, etc.
Cultural explanations	- primarily about the New Zealand education system
Enrolment support	- particularly with documentation and parent questions
Advocacy	- support with other agencies as well as with the school
First language maintenance	

Communication

Every school found the benefits of being able to communicate with students and their families in their first language to be a key advantage of using a BSW. A wide range of communication opportunities benefit from the enhanced communication made possible by having a BSW on a school's staff. Schools consider this liaison to be vital and note that improved relationships between the school and migrant communities are possible through this conduit. A phone call from a BSW in a parent's first language, inviting them to a school event or function is an excellent way of ensuring parents attend events and feel supported to connect with the school and other parents. Similarly, using Skype or similar and a BSW during a learning conference to connect to a parent overseas is hugely beneficial for both the school and the student.

Schools use BSWs to support face-to-face, written and electronic communication depending on need and context. Most schools have a vibrant WeChat group operating for migrant parents, which is often coordinated and/or moderated by the BSW. Schools with high numbers of parents on WeChat groups such as this noted fewer difficulties with communication of both general messages and urgent messages, such as during the March 2019 city-wide lockdown in Christchurch.

Several schools use websites and apps that have translation options for parents, providing improved communication without requiring input from the BSW. Regularly used examples of this are SchoolStream and Hail.

Teaching – including first language maintenance

As noted above, teacher aide support is the primary role of the BSW. In most cases, BSWs operate in a programme established by the individual school's ESOL teacher, ESOL coordinator or SENCO. Each school has identified areas of student need within its ESOL population and matched this to their BSW's level of confidence and experience, designing a programme to fit. Often training takes place as the programme is being implemented. BSWs commented on the need for them to have a regular timetable to support them, particularly when they first begin work. While this may seem to be 'reinventing the wheel' the needs of each school and the skills and knowledge of each BSW are too variable for a standardised programme to be developed. A more effective solution to provide onboarding support for schools new to BSWs would be to connect them with a school that has already inducted a BSW, linking both BSWs and both schools' staff in a professional learning community.

First language maintenance is valued by all of the schools interviewed, though most struggle to accommodate this in their programmes. Cummins (1981) propounds the *Think Tank model*, which assumes that first language and second language academic skills are interdependent. He suggests that promoting the development of first language skills in schools significantly improves second language skills among minority children. His findings imply that programmes designed to support children's first language oral and literacy skills can benefit their second language skills.

With this in mind, it is essential that schools find ways of using BSWs to support first language skills in their ESOL students. Several schools visited during this study set ESOL homework in the child's first language in an effort to ensure that the language is used for communication and learning at home, thus providing a basis for the acquisition of English language skills at school. Several schools also commented on ESOL students' increased self-efficacy and confidence as a result of being able to share their learning and their ability in their first language, and this being recognised by their peers - something that is only available with the support of a BSW.

Several BSWs undertake assessments of students in their first language. This provides information that supplements that obtained by the classroom teacher and allows each child to demonstrate their actual level of knowledge/area of need. Provision of opportunities to showcase ESOL students' strengths in their first language is vital to the building of self-esteem, as this strength/knowledge may only be available in the child's first language (Haddock, Nicholls & Stacey 2008).

The Sapir-Whorf hypothesis claims that a language's structure affects its speaker's world-view and cognition and thus people's perceptions are relative to their spoken language. This belief was supported by one of the BSWs interviewed, who stated that it 'can be traumatic for children to adjust to another culture' when they aren't yet secure in their first language. This BSW described a child who had been disenfranchised by not being able to speak either his first language or English well, stranding him between two cultures and negatively affecting his sense of identity. It stands to reason that when parents are from differing cultures and their child is brought up in a third culture, any sense of cultural identity can be lost. Supporting a student's first language is essential to ensuring that a sense of cultural identity is developed.

Both withdrawal and in-class support teaching programmes are in operation in the schools visited. While there are benefits to BSWs working in-class to support students, such as the opportunity for them to support English-speaking students also, there is a need for ESOL students to develop confidence in safe withdrawal scenarios before taking risks in the classroom environment. It can also be argued that they need to develop adequate language skills to be able to participate confidently in class.

Underpinning the effectiveness of BSWs' teaching programmes in the schools visited in this study was the respect shown by each school for learners from other countries. The schools visited had all developed culturally rich environments for the students and their families in a variety of ways. Easily observed in these schools were signage, positive relationships, knowledge of other cultures, respect for diversity and responsiveness to observed/identified needs.

Pastoral support

All of the school staff interviewed observed that the pastoral needs associated with ESOL families are increasing, affecting both students and parents, and differing for each ethnicity. The most common pastoral concerns discussed were related to attachment disorders, behavioural issues and social/emotional concerns. In several schools pastoral support involved BSWs, who connected parents with early childhood centres, churches, medical professionals, social agencies and other supports as required.

At the author's own school, an increase in ESOL family pastoral needs was observed following the events of March 15th 2019 in Christchurch. Having access to a BSW who spoke Arabic would have been a huge support for the school's Muslim community at this time – particularly for students as they returned to school.

Two schools noted that ESOL families are more willing to share school-related concerns with someone who speaks their first language. In this situation, the involvement of a BSW can resolve issues more quickly due to their understanding of cultural traditions and social mores, and their ability to communicate more effectively with parents. This provides parents with the confidence and encouragement needed to raise the issue with the school themselves.

Examples of initiatives involving BSWs and designed to support students and families with pastoral issues include:

- Boys' and girls' nights at school in their first language;
- Provision of networks for ESOL families;
- Meetings to identify needs within the ESOL community and then communicate these to the school;
- Establishing links to local churches and community groups;
- Helping to establish play dates for new ESOL students during the school holidays;
- Parent meetings in their first language to address needs and/or share information about matters such as sexuality education;
- Phone calls to each new ESOL family to ask about any help or support that may be needed; and
- Opportunities to learn how to cook local foods that have been donated to ESOL families.

Parenting support

One of the inevitable challenges of moving to a new country is adapting to different social and parenting expectations – especially if these are significantly different to those already in place within the family unit. All of the BSWs spoken with in this study mentioned the need for them to explain the cultural expectations and social mores of parenting in New Zealand to parents of the students they work with.

In addition to the need for BSWs to make regular informal responses to parenting issues and questions as they arise (mentioned by all schools visited), several schools also mentioned initiatives they had undertaken, via BSWs, to support ESOL families. These include:

- Regular liaison opportunities for parents to come and speak with the BSW without other school staff present;
- Provision of first language information about school lunches, bed times, play dates, after-school activities, etc;
- Termly/monthly parent forums in first languages to discuss issues families are grappling with, including parenting support;
- Workshops in first languages to describe how to support children with reading at home;
- Meetings with ethnic groups to ensure that food practices at school events and functions are culturally 'safe';
- Provision of homework links in first languages;
- Encouraging parents to support their child to complete their homework in their first language to ensure regular homework support takes place;
- Providing information in first languages about the importance of speaking children's first language at home to ensure the child has a solid foundation from which to learn English; and
- First language support to read notices and complete school documentation, e.g., EOTC documentation.

Cultural awareness

Reciprocity is a crucial requirement for the development of effective cultural awareness. Just as ESOL families and students need to adapt to the New Zealand schooling system, New Zealand schools need to ensure that there is adequate support, knowledge and personnel to meet migrants' needs. Cultural responsiveness and the ability to differentiate programmes and support are vital to ESOL students' success. As mentioned previously, ensuring the mana, self-belief and self-esteem of each student remains intact is essential to their academic and social success.

Schools interviewed all described the ways in which they'd sought to support and celebrate the different cultures within their communities. Some of the many opportunities and initiatives developed by schools to build cultural awareness via the use of BSWs are:

- An annual food festival;
- Annual flag celebrations;
- Acknowledging important festivals and events during the year, such as – Diwali, Ramadan, Chinese New Year, etc.;
- Using these events as opportunities to celebrate cultures and build greater understanding within the school community via presentations at assemblies;
- Parents cooking food for staff and explaining the cultural significance of the food/celebration at a staff morning tea;

- BSWs preparing a presentation for staff to showcase their culture and explain how it impacts their life in New Zealand; and
- BSWs holding workshops for staff to explain the systems and practices operating in classrooms in their home country and the major differences/barriers for ESOL children in New Zealand classes as a result.

This last initiative in particular, can be very useful in building greater awareness in teachers of the ways in which they can differentiate their classroom practice to support ESOL student adaptation and also the topics for which ESOL parents may require additional explanation. Using BSWs to share information, such as Chinese classrooms not usually implementing BYOD and the need for additional explanation for Chinese parents about purchasing a BYOD device, can prevent small issues becoming larger.

It was mentioned by several people interviewed for this study that initial teacher education appears to do little to prepare teachers for ESOL teaching. It was suggested that universities could enhance their programmes to incorporate both practical teaching strategies and knowledge and also teachers' ability to develop programmes that meet ESOL students' academic, social and cultural needs.

Two additional 'ponderings' shared by BSWs interviewed in this study are worth noting:

- the respect that some cultures have for schools and teachers can be a barrier to parents' involvement in the New Zealand context, as they may not ask questions of the teacher that they need to ask; and
- the role of women in some cultures can lead to female BSWs being seen by students as having less authority/need for respect than New Zealand born support staff or teachers.

Collaboration

All of the schools visited by the author welcomed opportunities to collaborate in order to build on the success of BSWs – both with other schools and also with other agencies/organisations – however most had not done so in practical terms. All agreed that the positive impact that BSWs have made in individual schools is 'ripe' to be built upon in order to increase their effectiveness and widen their scope. Several successful collaborations are already in place and could be researched to quantify their impact and value.

In one example of collaboration, several Auckland schools use their BSW as a conduit between the school and local churches. These schools belong to a kāhui ako with history of successful collaboration, enabling them to build on this previous success to focus on community engagement and wellbeing.

There are also two Auckland schools (and an early childhood centre) who share a BSW who speaks a minority language, noting that they have sufficient senior children in their schools to act as interpreters in their majority language. This collaboration allows them to connect a vulnerable parent from the minority language to their schools, and to support that particular family across both primary and intermediate schools.

Schools involved in Piritahi Kāhui Ako in Blenheim have employed three BSWs, each of whom speaks a different Pacific language, in an effort to pool this resource across their cluster. These schools spoke of the importance of equity, noting that collaboration enabled the programme to take place regardless of an individual school's size or decile. This kāhui ako also collaborates with respect to provision of professional

learning for these BSWs and other interested staff, ensuring continual development of skills across all schools.

It is this idea of sharing resources across established groups of schools that have the capacity and/or history to collaborate effectively, which is most exciting in terms of effective use of BSWs. Not all schools have the capacity to employ a BSW individually, beyond the funding provided by the Ministry of Education. Working together to share the resource and the financial load makes great sense and would be hugely beneficial to communities with ESOL needs.

Professional learning & development

When first employed, BSWs have the opportunity to participate in '*Working with English Language Learners*' (WELLS) professional learning via the Ministry of Education prior to beginning their teaching roles. The schools visited had all developed teaching programmes, timetables, support systems and professional learning plans to enable BSWs to be effective in, and feel confident about, their roles. The BSWs interviewed during this study stated that they valued this support and would appreciate additional professional learning on a needs basis. Ministry of Education Senior Advisors have indicated that they would welcome applications for further professional support to enable BSWs to enhance their skills and knowledge.

To supplement this timely and valuable resource, a number of schools have, both collectively and individually, supplemented this with their own training opportunities for BSWs. Schools who are relatively new to ESOL teaching may not have the infrastructure to provide this training themselves, so the opportunity to collaborate with other schools would be beneficial to all. Piritahi Kāhui Ako in Blenheim has experimented with this and established a programme that is proving effective for their BSWs and teachers, meeting four times each term. This group also invites principals and other interested parties so that there is understanding at all levels of the school about the BSW's role.

BSWs who were interviewed during this study spoke about a desire to learn more in order to become more effective in their roles, stating that increased professional learning opportunities would be welcome. They also sought opportunities to connect with others in similar roles in order to share ideas and experiences, and to create a support network. As two easy to accommodate next steps, BSWs stated that it would be helpful to have educational jargon explained to them on a 'just in time' rather than 'just in case' basis, and for teachers to clarify their expectations of BSWs so that they can have a clear understanding of their role.

There is an established ESOL cluster operating in north-west Christchurch, providing support of this nature for teachers and teacher aides. The group provides modeling of lessons and teaching techniques, and maintains a central resource library for the benefit of all members. It is worth considering extending this model to provide more formalised and/or regular PLD opportunities for BSWs as well.

Frustrations

As with any new initiative, there are always 'teething problems'. Some schools mentioned that the application and appointment process was so swift and easy that their BSW was in place before they'd had much of an opportunity to create a programme or schedule for them. Having a teacher with the release time, knowledge and capability to lead and train a BSW was an issue for a few schools, however this could be overcome by collaborating within a cluster or kāhui ako to pool resources.

Identifying the perfect person for each school's BSW position is crucial to the success of the role. Schools don't always have networks that extend to speakers of other languages who would be suitable for roles such as this, and in this case the assistance of the Ministry of Education's Senior Advisors: Refugee and Migrant Support are invaluable. These advisors were mentioned positively by schools throughout visits, and are respected for the many ways in which they provide both formal and informal support for schools and students.

Several BSWs mentioned receiving requests for information and support from parents via social media (WeChat) and email, including after 10pm at night. In some cases, ESOL families have tended to contact the BSW for information in their first language, rather than contacting the school. While schools are delighted that parents have connected so well with the BSW and are receiving the information they seek, there is possibility for parents to avoid contacting the school. Schools continue to explore ways in which the BSW can link parents back to the school, especially when the query is related to a student's learning or behaviour.

Ponderings

In addition to the ideas shared in this section, there were also a number of other initiatives and issues noted during the school visits which weren't necessarily related to the BSW role, but which may be of use to schools. As one principal who was interviewed stated, 'Sometimes we need to be brave enough to be out of the box and try new things.' These ideas include:

- Schools are using their BSWs as school-funded ESOL teacher aides once the Ministry of Education funding has ended.
- It could be useful for the Ministry of Education to maintain a list of people who are interested in applying for BSW positions.
- One school has established a craft market where families from different ethnicities can share their foods and sell their crafts.
- An Auckland school timetables their BSW in the playground after school each day and at sports and social events. They have found that parents are more likely to attend a school event when the BSW is present. At this school, the BSW also meets each new family when they enrol.
- A Christchurch school holds a parent morning tea after assembly once each term. They advertise that the BSW will be in attendance and note a high number of ESOL parents attending as a result. Often the BSW will send this information out on WeChat, noting that extended family members are welcome also.
- One school supplemented the Ministry of Education funding and employed two BSWs, funding one itself. This school's BSWs have found that having a colleague in the same role who can share experiences and ideas has boosted their confidence. This was especially helpful at the start of their employment. The principal of this school believes that this has enabled the BSW role to be effective more quickly than would have been possible had only one person been employed.
- Schools have not just translated signage around the school into their students' languages, but they also display the school's vision and values in these languages.
- In many immigrant families both parents are fully employed and grandparents assume responsibility for the day-to-day care of children. Schools need to connect these grandparents to their school as well as the parents. As a principal noted, 'The future of our city is empathy and connection. That's the hope for Auckland. No border between 'cities of ethnicity.'

- One school has found that if their BSW approaches migrant families for help on school trips, e.g., swimming programmes, camps, etc., parents are more likely to respond in the affirmative.
- A Southland school uses SchoolStream as their app because it translates into 40 languages. All school messages are sent in this way.
- Most schools started the year with a family fun night with food from a variety of cultures available for a picnic dinner. Several schools then branched off from this for a variety of 'meet the teacher' activities on the night.
- Many schools noted the need for initial teacher education to better prepare teachers for working with ESOL learners.
- A Blenheim school runs budgeting support classes for parents weekly after school while their children participate in a homework group. This school also had their BSW meet with each family from that language group to enquire about their aspirations for their children. They then interviewed the children and compared the two sets of results before creating an action plan to respond to this.
- Many schools make the BSW available to parents at the same time as learning conferences are held and/or use BSWs as translators.
- Some schools use Skype/Zoom during learning conferences so that a parent who is overseas at the time can participate.
- At one Christchurch school, senior ESOL students plan an outing each term with the BSW where they visit places around the city, travelling by bus. This same school provides end-of-term activities for these students, designed to build understanding about other cultures, such as dumpling making, origami, etc. These activities are always related to an aspect of their term's study.
- A Christchurch school has begun discussions with a local church, aiming to provide ESOL lessons for parents.
- One school celebrates each child's birthday by asking about how they celebrate birthdays within their culture and sharing this information with the class/school.
- Many schools mentioned that they pay BSWs at a higher rate for translation work to acknowledge the skill and knowledge required to undertake this function.

Implications:

Collaboration

Collaborative opportunities exist and can bring advantages to schools, students and families.

There are clear implications for collaboration across clusters of schools/kāhui ako in order to maximise the benefits available to schools through the appointment of a BSW, as modeled by Piritahi Kāhui Ako in Blenheim. As schools approach the end of their Ministry of Education funding for the BSW position, sustainability challenges require schools to prioritise, adapt and create to ensure that this valuable resource continues to be available. The key to success is having the support of the Principal, and ensuring that the Board of Trustees understands the academic, social and emotional benefits that BSWs provide to ESOL students, when making decisions about resourcing.

Connecting 'experienced' and 'novice' schools to streamline the establishment of a new BSW programme would result in gains for both schools.

All schools visited in this study mentioned the need to create a programme from scratch once their BSW was appointed. Connecting schools with experience in using a BSW with those schools just starting the

journey would simplify the transition and enable faster establishment of a programme. This would also support the development of a sustainable ESOL professional learning programme across both schools.

Professional learning & development

Increased professional learning opportunities would enhance BSWs' development of a wider skillset and increase their confidence in their roles.

Quality professional development is essential to the successful functioning of BSWs. While the Ministry of Education offers well-researched professional learning to schools that appoint a BSW, there is opportunity for schools themselves to collaborate to provide additional professional learning. Professional learning that is pertinent to the specific needs of the students in the local community could be developed in partnership with other schools that have employed BSWs. Significant scope exists to capitalise on the skills held within individual schools, ensuring sharing of ideas, resources and skills on a regular basis.

First language development/maintenance

Use of BSWs to support first language development and maintenance is necessary.

Second language development requires a sound grasp of a first language. As well as using BSWs to support students to learn English, using them to ensure that ESOL students have a sound grasp of their first language is conducive to academic gains in both languages.

Pastoral /parenting needs

The pastoral and parenting needs associated with ESOL students can be more easily met using a BSW.

These needs can be more sensitively raised, handled and met using someone fluent in the family's first language. Parenting support for ESOL families can be more effective when delivered by a migrant who has experienced the same transition; they can explain the social mores and cultural practices associated with life in New Zealand and relate this to the family's own experience, religion and practices.

Initial teacher education

The programmes of study provided in teacher training institutions in New Zealand should be enhanced to prepare teachers to better meet ESOL students' needs.

Providing teachers with the skills to differentiate programmes for ESOL students and connect with their family in a culturally responsive way, is central to successful teaching. Ensuring that teachers are prepared for and able to work collaboratively with a variety of support agencies and staff from a variety of cultural backgrounds is essential.

Ministry of Education

Funding, support and advice from Ministry of Education staff is central to successful BSW programmes.

The ongoing involvement of the Ministry of Education is vital to the success of BSWs in schools. Not only does the ministry allocate the funding, but the support of Senior Advisors: Refugee & Migrant Support is crucial for schools. These personnel not only coordinate quality professional learning and development for BSWs and support schools to find appointees, but they use their knowledge of the schools in their region and links to migrant communities to ensure that schools are well supported to continue to provide quality learning and teaching for ESOL students. These personnel are pivotal to the continued success of this programme.

Currently Senior Advisors: Refugee & Migrant Support are spread thinly across regions. Increased contact between schools and Senior Advisors would be helpful in ensuring that schools 'hit the ground running'

when appointing a BSW and that they can draw on the experience of schools who have received this resourcing previously. Greater resourcing for these advisors would ensure they are able to undertake increased liaison with schools in their regions and allow schools to discuss options and possibilities before appointing BSWs, bringing benefits for these schools and students.

Opportunities

Identifying and sharing the ways in which schools are using BSWs to connect groups within the school community would enable greater community connection.

Opportunities exist for schools to build further on the role of BSW and use of these staff to create links with migrant groups within their community. Examples of this have been mentioned above, e.g., a school providing learning spaces for privately funded first language lessons after school, and a school that provide spaces for budgeting advice for parents and a homework club for children at the same time. There are many ways in which schools and migrant groups could link via BSWs to pursue initiatives of benefit to the school and local community, and discussions about these opportunities should be encouraged.

Advertising the role of the BSW more widely within the local community could assist in identifying opportunities for purposeful collaboration in this manner. It would be interesting to investigate whether the publicity around the role of the BSW at Amuri Area School in both local media and the Immigration New Zealand website has initiated identification of any such opportunities.

Conclusions:

The appointment of Bilingual Support Workers has made a significant difference to all of the schools interviewed as part of this study. These benefits range widely, including improvements in communication with whānau, student achievement, community engagement and student wellbeing. All of these gains are difficult to quantify but are part of the 'soft data' that impact on the functioning of a school. For those schools with growing or large ESOL populations, the appointment of a BSW is a factor that contributes significantly to the successful connection of ESOL students and their families to the school community.

In the wider context, as immigration to our country increases, ensuring that migrant families are assisted to settle and to connect easily with their local school is vital to ensuring a positive local and national community. BSWs play an important role in the success of ESOL programmes in schools, acting as role models for students and conduits between the school and ESOL families. BSWs are important to ensuring that ESOL students connect with their school and are able to take advantage of the opportunities available to them. This is important because, in the words of one BSW interviewed in this study, 'Children familiar with two cultures can make a big difference to New Zealand.'

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