

The publication of this issue of our Journal brings to an end my term as Editor. Appointed to the role in 1991, I have enjoyed a very rewarding if somewhat busy five years in working with colleagues in Australia and overseas in the selection and publication of a wide variety of manuscripts. While endeavouring to build on the Journal's established quality, I have also tried to encourage the efforts of those new to writing for a journal readership and am pleased to say that quite a few manuscripts from classroom teachers, new researchers and others have appeared in recent years. In addition, there has been considerable published work by established overseas and Australian researchers.

In Australia and New Zealand, massive changes in conceptualising Special Education services have either occurred or are in planning stages. Some of these changes appear to reflect an over-reaction to the very sound principles of Inclusion, in that the move *towards* education in integrated settings may become the forced placement of all students with special needs, as existing support class facilities are gradually removed. The planned replacement of system-wide "formula funding" arrangements for certain special education services by individual submissions for "needs-based" services, has already been shown to be problematic for schools in obtaining, for example, appropriate support resources for helping students with learning difficulties.

Recent correspondence to this office from New Zealand has pointed to difficulty in that country in maintaining a Special Education professional association. This is said to be due to the 'de-specialisation' of teaching for students with special needs following the reorganisation of services in that country towards a more regular class based model.

Clearly, Special Education exists as a means of enhancing educational outcomes for students with special learning needs associated with disability, behaviour disorder, learning difficulty or a number of other life circumstances. Special Education should be pragmatic and forward-thinking enough to be able to embrace changes as they are needed in the way its services are provided for school students and their families. However, in the view of this writer, Special Education should also remain committed to the need to see empirical support for the methodologies it espouses, whether they be at individual treatment/therapy level, or whether they be at the system level of service provision. That is to say, we should urge governments and other school system

providers to ensure that service principles such as full Inclusion do work for all of the students with whom they are used. It is the fear of many involved in Special Education that for some children, the Inclusion movement may eventually lead to increasing periods of school suspension, as schools find the behaviour in the regular classes of certain students to be "unacceptable".

The articles in the present volume do provide some perspectives on the issues raised above. Jennifer Stephenson identifies processes involved in parent participation in program planning in the special school environment. Still on the theme of working with parents, Bentley-Williams and Butterfield describe some case studies on the transition from Early Intervention to school placement and the care which is needed in that process. Whiting and Young examine the question of Inclusion from the regular class teacher's perspective and identify critical challenges for system managers who want Inclusion to be a success. Sigafos, Bushell, and Tucker present some helpful data on the use of a consultation model in service delivery, especially apposite at this time. Happily, Margie Sare's paper presents welcome changes in the depiction of disability in some recent children's literature.

On a sadder note however, we note the recent death of Professor Sam Kirk, a giant figure in Special Education, particularly in relation to the needs of students in the USA, with "learning disability". Kirk's work has been very influential in Australia too, and his contacts with this country will be well remembered by many of our members. The obituary to Kirk, prepared by Emeritus Professor Bob Henderson, a long time friend and colleague, is fitting in view of Henderson's long and energetic service to this Journal as Editorial Consultant.

Arrangements for the appointment of a new Editor for the Journal are currently in the hands of the Association Executive. Until a new appointment is made, Journal correspondence and manuscripts will be received at this office for passing on to the new Editor as soon as possible.

My best wishes are extended for the continuing success of the Journal and the Australian Association of Special Education at this important time.

Ken Linfoot
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