



# Teachers and Teacher Aides Working Together

**Supporting Students with Complex Needs**  
Module 3 Workbook



Nāku to rourou  
nāu te rourou  
ka ora ai te ākongā.

With my basket and  
your basket the  
learner will thrive.

Published by the New Zealand Ministry of Education.  
[www.education.govt.nz](http://www.education.govt.nz)

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## About this resource

### Background

*Teachers and Teacher Aides Working Together* is a set of modules that teachers and teacher aides complete together.

Each module in this series is a 'ready-to-use' pack with a presentation, workbook and activities so learning can be put into practice. Some modules include self-paced e-learning. The module materials come in different formats to allow choice about how you learn.

Find out more at [Teachers and Teacher Aides Working Together](#).

The modules follow an inquiry cycle. The workbook has a section for each step in the cycle.



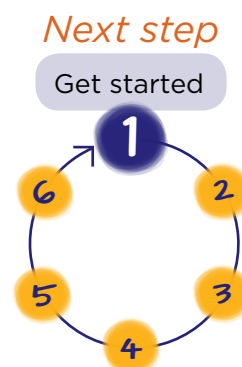
If you are leading the learning, refer to the [Facilitator Quick Guide](#) and gather any additional materials needed to complete the activities.

Download the learning materials from the [Module 3 page](#) of the Teachers and Teacher Aides Working Together site.

Note that you have some choices about how you access the module materials. This is the PDF workbook format. It includes links to required resources and printable worksheets for the activities. If you are working with hard copy, you will need to access the online version to activate the links.

For an enhanced online reading experience, access the [e-workbook for Module 3](#). In the e-workbook, activity sheets are Google Docs that you can print, download as Word documents or copy to your own Google Drive for working online.

You also have the option to download a PowerPoint or view a narrated presentation.



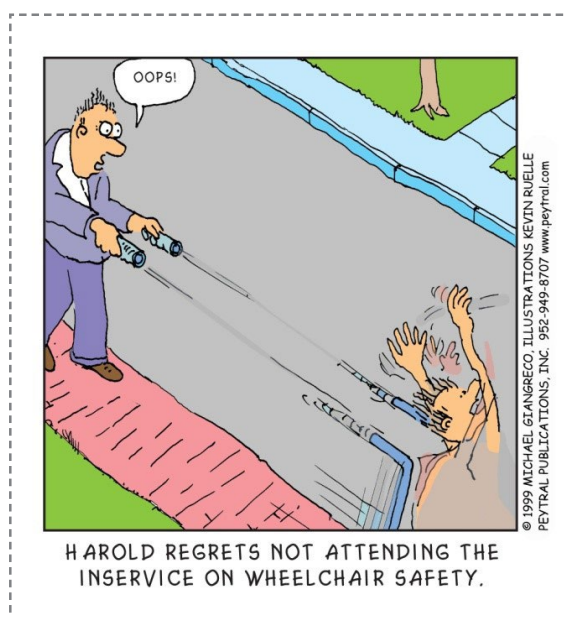
# 1. Get started

Start by watching the video. Then read the cartoon, quotes and key principles. They introduce the main ideas covered in this module. Discuss these as a group. The learning outcomes describe what you'll achieve once you've completed the six steps.



Watch the video [My World, My View \(short version\)](#) at the Ministry of Education's inclusive education Vimeo album.

“ We've always had that expectation for him - that he will succeed, that he will have what he needs to make his learning ok - and he's just lived up to our expectations. ”  
*Classroom teacher*



“ Almost all schools were positive about including students with special education needs. Their commitment to including these students was underpinned by school values and culture, and demonstrated by leadership, shared responsibility and partnerships with parents and whānau. Schools identified positive ways they included students with special education needs, and were very confident about being a fully inclusive school. ”  
*Inclusive practices for students with special needs in schools, Education Review Office, 2015, p. 2*

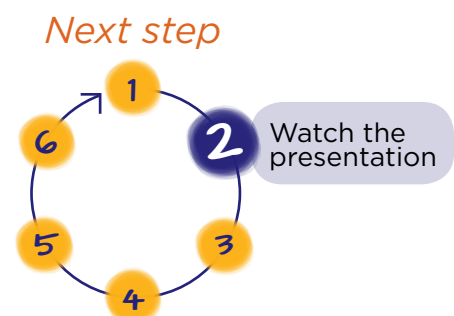
## Key principles

- Some students require extra support at school for their physical and personal care and communication. Teacher aides are a valuable resource providing this support.
- Support for physical and personal care and communication should be provided in ways that respects the students, treats them with dignity, and considers how they want to be supported.
- Learning must be visible for all students, no matter how much support they require. Meeting a student's health and care needs should never be at the expense of their education.
- Teachers and teacher aides are powerful role models in the ways they support students with complex needs. Their interactions are likely to impact the way other students view and treat their peers.
- Schools should have a documented plan on how to provide physical and personal care for individual students who need this support. Responsibility for the provision and quality of support is shared across a team of people. Therefore, the plan should be developed collaboratively by all those involved, including the student, their families/whānau, teachers and teacher aides and specialists.
- Teacher aides providing personal and physical care for students should have access to appropriate training and support.
- The role of teacher aides supporting a student with high communication needs includes helping other people, including peers, to communicate effectively with the student.

## Learning outcomes

This module is intended to support teachers and teacher aides to achieve four aims:

1. Recognise that supporting students with complex needs requires:
  - a. empathy and respect for students' preferences and dignity
  - b. access to relevant school policies, students' individual plans and other appropriate support, for example, training.
2. Identify ways to:
  - a. show respect for students
  - b. access support for meeting students' needs.
3. Trial a jointly agreed strategy for working with students who require physical or personal care or who have communication needs.
4. Reflect on and evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy, using the questions in this module.

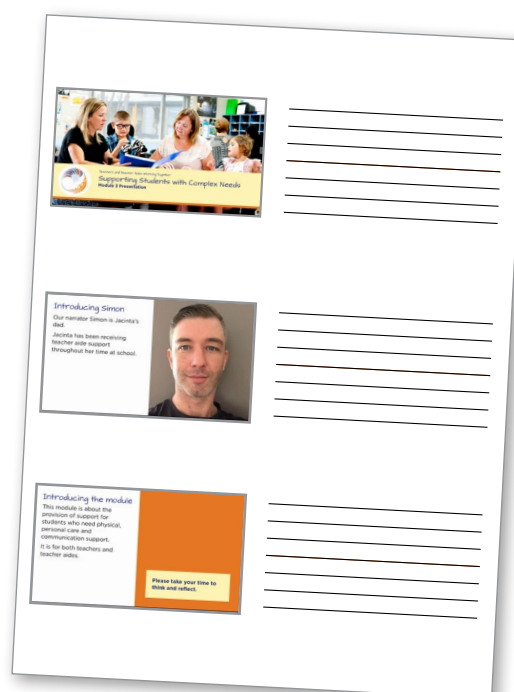




## 2. Watch the presentation

Watch the presentation about supporting students with complex needs. Read the discussion on the next pages for further information.

Visit the [Module 3 e-workbook](#) to download or watch the presentation.



### Further information

#### Why this module?

Some people require extra support to complete day-to-day activities. Teacher aides are a valuable resource in supporting students who have physical, personal care and communication support needs. Providing this support ensures that these students enjoy the same access to a quality education as their peers.

#### Being a role model

While respectful and supportive relationships with teachers and teacher aides are critical to student learning and well-being, so too are students' relationships with peers. The ways teachers and teacher aides interact and include students with complex needs may influence the way other students view and treat their peers.

#### Respecting privacy and dignity

Some students need help with eating, lifting, positioning, toileting, dispensing medicine and moving around the school. This kind of support needs to be provided in unobtrusive ways that empower the



student and respect their privacy and dignity. Talk with your students about their preferences or talk to those who know the student well. Ask their family/whānau for their insights.

Ask yourself these questions:

- How would I like to be treated?
- Have I allowed the student the time and opportunity to tell me what they want?
- Have I asked the student what they prefer with physical transitions?
- Do I speak to the student the same way as I do to other students?
- Do I know what class the student doesn't want to miss so I can work around this?

## Supporting students who require a high level of physical care

If a student requires a high level of physical care, a specialist may help develop a moving and handling plan and/or a health-care plan. The specialist may also show you strategies and techniques for implementing the plan. For example, the specialist may demonstrate how to support a student who needs help with eating. For more information, see *Health Conditions in Education Settings* (Ministry of Education, 2006).

School documents on a student's health and safety at school should be available to all staff working with the student. The documents may include information about dispensing medication, physically transferring the student or what to do in an emergency. While this information should be accessible, it must also be handled in ways that respect the student's privacy.

## Supporting students with high communication needs

Specialists may be involved in supporting a student with high communication needs to use assistive technology and other methods to help them communicate and be understood. Teachers and teacher aides can help others to learn and use the communication method the student is using, for example, signing or pictures.

Teachers and teacher aides also remove barriers to communication by modelling respectful ways of communication and helping other students understand the way the student communicates. For example, they can model pausing and allowing time for the student to communicate their responses.

## Supporting students with an individual education plan

Some students with additional learning needs have an individual education plan (IEP). IEPs are collaboratively developed documents that help inform these students' pathways to learning. They ensure all students have access to the same curriculum. For more information, see Module 6 in this series and *Collaboration for Success* (Ministry of Education, 2011).

## Teamwork, teamwork, teamwork

Effective teamwork and collaborative decision-making is essential when supporting students with complex needs – when everyone in the team participates, everyone benefits. Team members bring different skills and knowledge:

- student – their own goals and vision for themselves, including what they want to learn and how they want to learn
- families and whānau – intimate knowledge of their children
- peers – knowledge (which may have been developed over some time) of a student's likes, dislikes, hopes, dreams, capabilities and personal traits
- teacher – knowledge about learning, teaching, curriculum, assessment and knowledge of the student as a learner
- teacher aide – often has knowledge about the student's preferences, friendships, strengths and likes
- specialists – knowledge about communication, mobility and care.

## Keeping yourself safe

Teachers and teacher aides need to be safe when supporting students with complex needs. You need to have access to appropriate training and be aware of relevant school policies and procedures.

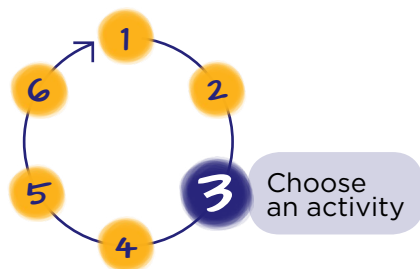
## References

Education Review Office. (2015). *Inclusive practices for students with special needs in schools*. Wellington: Education Review Office. <http://www.ero.govt.nz/publications/inclusive-practices-for-students-with-special-education-needs-in-schools/>

Ministry of Education. (2006). *Health conditions in education settings: Supporting children and young people*. Wellington: Ministry of Education. <http://www.education.govt.nz/ministry-of-education/specific-initiatives/health-and-safety/practice-framework-resources-for-health-and-safety/health-conditions-in-education-settings-supporting-children-and-young-people/>

Ministry of Education. (2011). *Collaboration for Success: Individual Education Plans*. Wellington: Learning Media. <http://seonline.tki.org.nz/IEP>

Next step





## 3. Choose an activity

Choose one or two activities to do in pairs or small groups. Go to the back of the workbook for each activity's instructions, worksheets, and resources.

### Activity 1

#### Keeping safe in your work

In this activity, you will discover ways that a school's supports, practices and systems can keep teacher aides safe. You will relate the examples to your school and your work.

### Activity 2

#### Discussing scenarios about respecting students

In this activity, you will talk about scenarios for supporting students. Some of the scenarios highlight effective practice for respectfully supporting students, and some highlight less effective practice. You will discuss ways that practice could be improved.

### Activity 3

#### What Kapanui School did

In this activity, you will read about Kapanui School, a full primary school in Waikanae, north of Wellington. Kapanui School had a fundamental rethink about how its teacher aides were used to work with students with complex needs. You will discuss how you support students with complex needs in your school.

## Activity 4

### Exploring students' rights

In this activity, you will read a handout about students' rights. The handout has quotes from the Education Act 1989, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People and the Code of Health and Disability Consumer Rights. You will discuss how your work supports disabled people's presence, participation and learning at your school.

## Activity 5

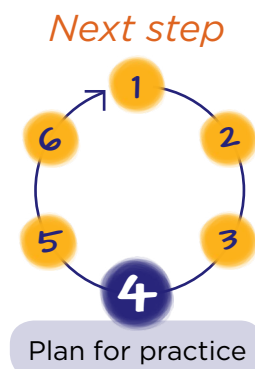
### Supporting communication

In this activity, you will look at Tom's communication passport to see some of the ways a student can communicate and how to educate others about this. You will discuss how students you work with communicate and whether more could be done to help others understand them.

## Activity 6

### Exploring online resources about effective teacher aide practice

In this activity, you will explore a section of the guide *Supporting effective teacher aide practice on Inclusive Education*. This part of the guide presents ideas for asking students how they want to be supported by a teacher aide.







## 4. Plan for practice

It's time to plan how you will put your learning into practice. Try one of these suggestions in your work together over the next few weeks.

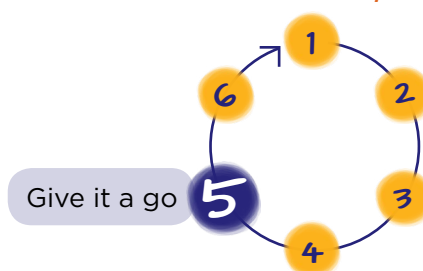
If you support a student who requires physical or personal care or who has high communication needs, locate any specific plans for the student (for example, their Individual Education Plan (IEP), health-care plan, or moving and handling plan) and any relevant school policies or guidelines. Read the information and discuss any questions with your colleagues. Consider whether any follow-up is required, such as contacting a specialist for training.

In Activity 2, you read and discussed some scenarios. Revisit your ideas about how support could be improved. Decide on a new way of interacting or a change you could make that shows your respect for your students. Trial your new way of interacting over the next two or three weeks.

In activities 1, 3, 5 and 7 you are prompted to talk to a member of the school's leadership team if you have questions to raise. Consider what you learned and what you might do differently as a result.



*Next step*

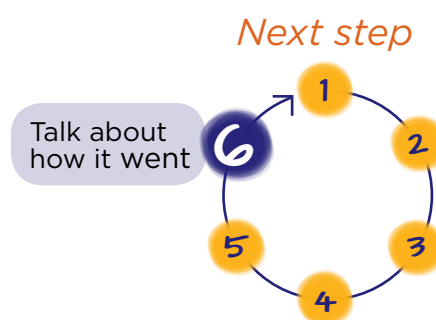






## 5. Give it a go

Implement the strategy you decided on in Step 4. Use the space below to make notes about what you did and how it went.





## 6. Talk about how it went

Meet to talk about how the strategy from Step 4 went. Discuss and plan how you might adapt or modify your practice. Use the questions below to guide your reflection.

- What might our students have noticed or experienced when we tried our new approach?
- How might we change our practice next time?
- To what extent do we model respect for all students in our work?
- To what extent do student preferences determine the way we provide support for physical, personal and communication needs?
- What guidelines or policies about physical or personal support can we refer to in our school? Who do we talk to if we need more advice about providing physical or personal support?
- What are we going to do next to improve the way we support students with complex needs in our school?

### Possible next steps

When thinking about what you might do next, consider the other topics in this series:

- Teachers and Teacher Aides: Who Does What?
- Keeping Our Work Confidential, Professional and Safe
- What Do We Think about Disability and Diversity?
- Identifying Students' Strengths
- Students Participating in their Individual Education Plans (IEP)
- Understanding the New Zealand Curriculum
- Fostering Peer Relationships
- Creating Inclusive Classrooms
- Supporting Student Learning in the Whole Class
- Teacher Aide Interaction that Supports Student Learning

Visit [Teachers and Teacher Aides Working Together](#) to access these modules.



# Activity options

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### 3 Supporting Students with Complex Needs

## Keeping safe in your work

## Activity 1

In this activity, you will discover ways that a school can help keep teacher aides safe in their work. You will relate the examples in the handout to what happens at your school and in your work.



Working in pairs or small groups, refer to the worksheet (over the page) about keeping safe at work. The handout has examples of the supports, practices and systems within a school that help keep teacher aides safe in their work.

Talk about the supports, practices and systems described. Talk about what it's like in your school.



Working together, write down your school practices on the worksheet. If you think of any other supports in your school not on the worksheet, write these in, too.



If you have questions or suggestions about your school's supports, practices and systems for keeping teacher aides safe in their work, talk to a member of your school's leadership team about this activity.

### 3 Supporting Students with Complex Needs

## *Keeping safe in your work (continued)*

## *Activity 1*

### **Keeping teacher aides safe in their work**

### **What's it like in your school?**

#### *Providing physical care*

Teacher aides who provide physical support for students need access to specialist guidance and training, for example, in how to make safe transfers.

#### *Providing medication*

Teacher aides who give students medication need clear written instructions detailing the medication protocol for individual students. They need ready access to these instructions.

#### *Providing personal care*

Teacher aides who help students dress, go to the toilet and eat need to understand and follow the student's health-care plan. This plan will include information from specialists involved in the student's care.

#### *Managing behaviour*

Teacher aides who provide behaviour support for individual students should be following an individual behaviour plan that has been developed by a specialist or teacher. In the classroom, the teacher aide needs to be aware of and follow the teacher's protocol for promoting positive behaviour.

#### *Communication within the school*

Regular discussion between teachers and teacher aides is necessary to air and resolve issues.

Teacher aides need to know which member of the leadership team to talk to when they require guidance.

#### *Job description*

Job descriptions should provide clarity about role definition and expectations. They should be available to teachers and teacher aides when they start in their roles, and there should be appropriate opportunities for review.

**What other supports, practices and systems are there in your school for keeping teacher aides safe?**



### 3 Supporting Students with Complex Needs

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## *Discussing scenarios about connections*

## *Activity 2*

In this activity, you will talk about scenarios where teacher aides have connections both in and out of school. The scenarios highlight ways that being connected can be advantageous and ways that these connections can raise issues about confidentiality or privacy.



Read the scenarios that describe ways to support students.



Working in pairs or small groups, discuss each scenario. Sort them into examples where students are supported respectfully and examples where more could be done to respect students.



Look again at the scenarios that do not show respect for the student, where their right to privacy is infringed or where there are safety issues. Discuss what could be changed to improve practice.



If you have questions or suggestions about how your school supports students respectfully, talk to a member of your school's leadership team about this activity.

### 3 Supporting Students with Complex Needs

## *Discussing scenarios about connections (continued)*

## *Activity 2*

1. I support Miriam in class and during lunchtimes. She requires tube-feeding. Miriam eats with her friends and I'm there, too. I manage her tube-feeding and adjust her clothes, which sometimes ride up a bit.
2. I sometimes talk to the teacher about Chase during class time. Chase and the other students can probably overhear us, but I don't think they understand what we're talking about. We always do it.
3. Anil needs my help to eat. When I'm helping Anil, I have time to talk to the other adults in the room. We talk about all sorts of things.
4. When I started working with Kate, I noticed she drooled and her top often got wet. I know she loves watching the Crusaders, so I asked her if she would like me to make her some black and red Crusaders bandanas.
5. Jeremy uses assistive technology to communicate. When he wants to go to the toilet, he presses a button and a voice says, "I need toilet". It's pretty loud. The other kids in the class can ask to be excused in a way that draws less attention. I'd like to change the sound on Jeremy's device, so he won't be embarrassed when he needs to ask for my help.
6. Apryll makes noises and involuntary movements when she is excited. This causes a disturbance in class. I'd like to talk to the teachers and Apryll's Nan about how we could talk to the class so they understand why Apryll responds in this way.
7. Shima had an epileptic seizure during assembly last week. I didn't know what to do, and neither did any of the other staff who work with her. I think there is a plan for Shima, but I'm not sure where it is or what it says.
8. Danny hates loud noises. When he gets agitated, I talk calmly to him and the other students around him. The students are learning why Danny reacts in certain ways. I've noticed that when he gets agitated, they are now talking quietly, too.
9. Marama gets angry and throws things around the room. When this happens, the teacher asks the students to leave the room. I don't know why we don't just move Marama out. I know the teacher has a behaviour plan for Marama – someone came to the school a couple of times and helped her write it.
10. I am aware that Elina has been to the toilet. She has returned to class and she smells. Other students are commenting on this. I'm ignoring what's going on and not responding to what the other students are saying. I hope this stops them talking about Elina.

### 3 Supporting Students with Complex Needs

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#### *Discussing scenarios about connections (continued)*

#### *Activity 2*

- 11.** Sam has a cochlear implant and an FM system. He often misses out on the banter in class because he can't hear the faraway comments. I think if a buddy sat next to him, it might help him to keep up.
- 12.** Sione is working in a small group with other students and is getting restless. He may not have taken his medication. I don't want to risk his behaviour getting any worse so I walk over to the group and ask if he's had his pill today.
- 13.** I'm working with Ana, a new student at our school, who is blind. Other staff are asking me about Ana and her specific needs while I'm working with her.
- 14.** Tainui told me that he didn't want me to work with him in class anymore, because having a teacher aide makes the other kids think he's dumb. I told him not to worry about what the other kids think - he needs me there to help him finish his work.

### 3 Supporting Students with Complex Needs

## What Kapanui School did

## Activity 3

Read about Kapanui School, a full primary school in Waikanae, north of Wellington that had a fundamental rethink about how its teachers and teacher aides worked with students with complex needs. Discuss how you support students with complex needs in your school.



Working individually to begin with, read the case study *Combining Simple Solutions: Kapanui School*. It can be downloaded from: [www.educationalleaders.govt.nz/Managing-your-school/School-support-staff](http://www.educationalleaders.govt.nz/Managing-your-school/School-support-staff)

As you read, highlight any ideas that are new or interesting.



In pairs or small groups, talk about how Kapanui School shared responsibility for supporting a student with high (or complex) needs across several teacher aides. Discuss any sections you highlighted.

Discuss these questions:

- How has Kapanui School set things up so that several teacher aides support students with complex needs?
- What benefits has Kapanui School found in sharing responsibilities for supporting students across several teacher aides?
- How are teacher aides used in your school to support students with complex needs? Are there ways to use teacher aides more effectively?



If you have questions or suggestions about how teacher aides can best support students with complex needs, talk to a member of your school's leadership team about this activity.

### 3 Supporting Students with Complex Needs

## Exploring students' rights

## Activity 4

Read the handout on exploring students' rights, with quotes from the Education Act 1989, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Disabled People and the Code of Health and Disability Consumer Rights. Discuss how your work supports disabled people's presence, participation and learning at your school.



Read the handout over the page about exploring students' rights. These rights are particularly relevant for students with disabilities. Other rights include the right to privacy and the right to complain. Everyone has these rights.



Work in pairs, small groups or a large group and discuss the handout. How are students' rights upheld in your school?



If you have questions or suggestions about students' rights, talk to others in your school about this activity, such as a member of senior management.



### 3 Supporting Students with Complex Needs

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## Exploring students' rights (continued)

## Activity 4

The **Education Act 1989** requires schools to enrol students, irrespective of students' needs and abilities.

*Equal rights to primary and secondary education*

*(1) Except as provided in this Part, people who have special educational needs (whether because of disability or otherwise) have the same rights to enrol and receive education at State schools as people who do not.*

New Zealand is a signatory of the **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**.

*Article 24:*

*Disabled people should be able to access free, inclusive primary and secondary education wherever they live.*

*Disabled people have the right to reasonable adjustments and extra support to take part in education.*

The **Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights** is law under the Health and Disability Commissioner Act 1994. The Code sets out ten rights of consumers and the duties of providers.

*Right 1: the right to be treated with respect*

*Right 2: the right to freedom from discrimination, coercion, harassment, and exploitation*

*Right 3: the right to dignity and independence*

*Right 4: the right to services of an appropriate standard*

*Right 5: the right to effective communication*

*Right 6: the right to be fully informed*

*Right 7: the right to make an informed choice and give informed consent*

*Right 8: the right to support*

*Right 9: rights in respect of teaching or research*

*Right 10: the right to complain*

### 3 Supporting Students with Complex Needs

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## Exploring students' rights (continued)

## Activity 4

The **New Zealand Disability Strategy** sets out a blueprint for the inclusion of people with disabilities. Objective 3 is “to provide the best education for disabled people”. Its achievement requires eight actions:

*3.1 Ensure that no child is denied access to their local, regular school because of their impairment.*

*3.2 Support the development of effective communication by providing access to education in New Zealand Sign Language, communication technologies and human aids.*

*3.3 Ensure that teachers and other educators understand the learning needs of disabled people.*

*3.4 Ensure that disabled students, families, teachers and other educators have equitable access to the resources available to meet their needs.*

*3.5 Facilitate opportunities for disabled students to make contact with their disabled peers in other schools.*

*3.7 Promote appropriate and effective inclusive educational settings that will meet individual educational needs.*

*3.8 Improve post-compulsory education options for disabled people, including: promoting best practice, providing career guidance, increasing lifelong opportunities for learning and better aligning financial support with educational opportunities.*

## References

Minister for Disability Issues. (2001). The New Zealand Disability Strategy: Making a world of difference: Whakanui Oranga. Wellington: Ministry of Health.  
[www.odi.govt.nz/about-us/index.html](http://www.odi.govt.nz/about-us/index.html)

The Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights  
[www.hdc.org.nz/the-act--code/the-code-of-rights](http://www.hdc.org.nz/the-act--code/the-code-of-rights)

The Education Act 1989  
[www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1989/0080/latest/DLM175959.html#DLM177470](http://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1989/0080/latest/DLM175959.html#DLM177470)

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities  
[www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml](http://www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml)

### 3 Supporting Students with Complex Needs

## Supporting communication

## Activity 5

Refer to Tom's Communication Passport for some of the ways a student can communicate and how to educate others about this. Discuss how students you work with communicate and whether more could be done to help others understand them.



Work in pairs or small groups and look at Tom's communication passport (see over).

There are a number of ways a student can communicate, and some students like Tom use gesture. A communication passport usually has photos of the student using gesture, with text explaining what the gesture means. A communication passport is a way of educating others about the meaning of a student's gesture. It can help students and adults to communicate with each other.



Use these questions to prompt discussion with colleagues about the students you are currently working with:

- Do any of your students use communication that their peers or other staff may not be able to interpret?
- Would a communication passport help these students?
- How would you make and use a passport like this in your class or school?
- How would you make sure that student, family and whānau preferences are taken into account and the student's right to respect and dignity upheld?



If you have questions or suggestions about supporting students with communication needs, talk to a member of your school's leadership team about this activity.

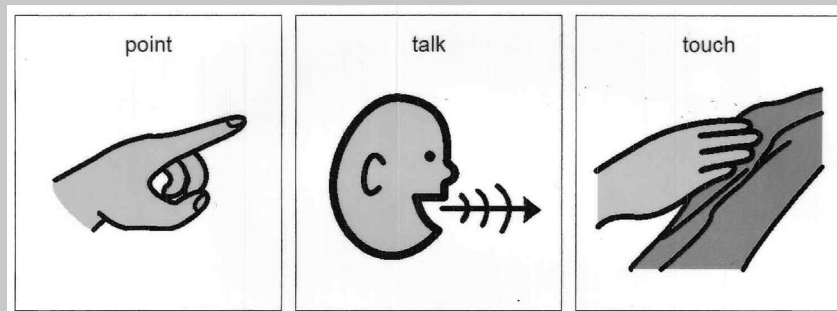
### 3 Supporting Students with Complex Needs

## Supporting communication (continued)

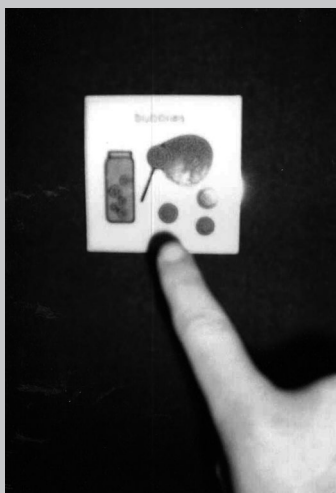
## Activity 5

### Tom's Communication Passport

Can you understand what I want?



If I point to a symbol ...



"Help me to get this."

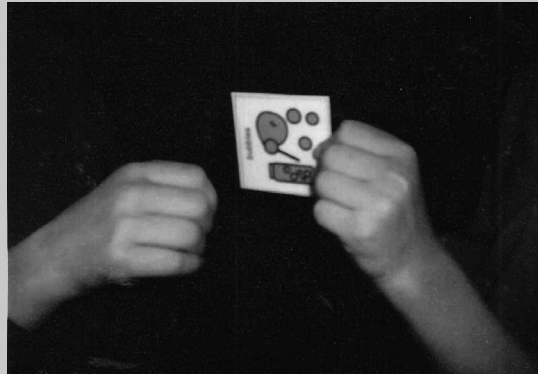
"I want this."

### 3 Supporting Students with Complex Needs

## Supporting communication (continued)

## Activity 5

If I bring you a symbol ...



"Please read this symbol to see what I would like from you."

If I put my hand on your shoulder  
and push it ...



"No."

"Go away."

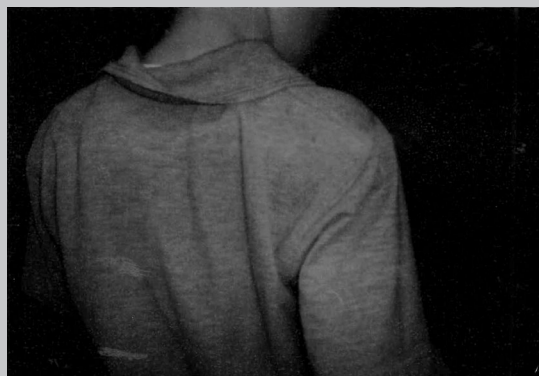


### 3 Supporting Students with Complex Needs

## Supporting communication (continued)

## Activity 5

If I shrug my shoulder ...



"I don't want to."

"Wait. Don't rush me."

If I take your hand ...



"Do you want to play with me?"

### 3 Supporting Students with Complex Needs

## Supporting communication (continued)

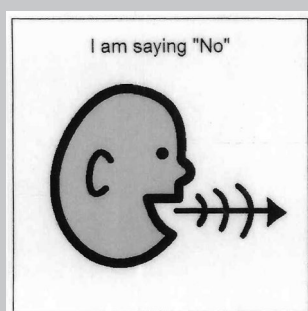
## Activity 5

If I bring a ball or skipping rope to you ...



"Do you want to play?"

If I say, "n, n, n," or "n, n, no" ...



"No."

I like to make lots of noises and sounds. People who know me well will know what I mean when I make sounds.

Sometimes my sounds mean I am happy and love being in class with you.

Sometimes my sounds mean I need to have a break.

Sometimes I am not sure what my sounds mean.

There are adults who help me when my sounds say I need a break.

### 3 Supporting Students with Complex Needs

## Exploring online resources about effective teacher aide practice

## Activity 6

In this activity, you will explore a section of the guide *Supporting effective teacher aide practice* on Inclusive Education. It covers ideas about asking students how they want to be supported by a teacher aide.



Explore the section of the guide *Supporting effective teacher aide practice* called Prompt teachers to ask students how they want to be supported by a teacher aide.



Discuss the content you have just explored.

To support your talk, consider these questions:

- What are the benefits of asking students how they want to be supported by a teacher aide?
- Are students in our school asked how they want to be supported by a teacher aide? If so, how does this happen and how are their views captured and acted on? If not, why and how could we ask students how they want to be supported by a teacher aide?



If you have questions about how students' views on being supported by a teacher aide are captured in your school, talk about this activity with a member of the leadership team.