Interview Synthesis

Families & Whānau

## Family Centered Practice

The position of family as first educators is a strongly held value for the Specialist Teacher Vision. Family expectations and aspirations for their child must always be considered. The Specialist Teacher Vision role is based on relationship with families and whanau in order to best support the child. A key difficulty in the role is ensuring that family aspirations for the child are translated into realistic and attainable goals with achievable steps.

### Relationship

Building trust and reciprocal relationships is essential to working with familes. Often families are not interested in what you know but in that you care and can be trusted as their advocate. Maintaining relationship with families becomes more difficult as the student grows and services are provided more in the school than the home. Communication then depends on email, notes home in school bags, and telephone calls/ txt. Relationships are best built around face to face communication.

### Transition to new service providers

When transitioning students build in enough time for this to happen smoothly, allowing time for the extended whanau to be included in the introductory process.

### Managing expectations

An example provided by an interview candidate highlights the dilemma of parent expectation. The student’s eye condition, Ussher syndrome, involves hearing loss from an early age and as a child heads towards puberty vision deteriorates to blindness. The dilemma was should the specialist teacher vision tell the student or should they do as the parents requested which was not to tell him because the mother refused to tell her son. It was decided to go with what the parent said because it was ethically the parent’s position to disclose this information. The school had a Social Worker and the Specialist Teacher Vision felt it imperative to share concerns with the social worker. The Social worker continued to support the mother over a long period of time until the student was told. The Social Worker took a lead to let the parent know the ramifications of his condition including a joint visit to the Ophthalmologist to explain what would happen in a matter of fact manner so the parents would understand.

### Interpreting Reports

Families are often the recipients of complex reports from medical and other specialists. The Specialist Teacher Vision supports parents, whanau, teachers and Education Support Workers in understanding the implications of the report. It is often appropriate to attend ophthalmology appointments with the family and student to provide support and facilitate questioning.

### Barriers to effective relationships with parents and whānau

* Excessive size of case loads,
* Range of cultural diversity and lack of knowledge of family culture.