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Mainstreaming secondary students with intellectual  
disabilities into regular classrooms: An  
investigation of the perceived training needs of  
classroom teachers

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Peter Greville Shimman  
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## ABSTRACT

The New Zealand education system, like that of other countries, is currently committed to increasing the level to which students with disabilities are integrated into regular classrooms. This policy of "mainstreaming" brings regular classroom teachers increasingly in contact with students with special educational needs. Pre-service training may not have prepared classroom teachers to work with mainstreamed students. In-service training has been advocated as an effective way to address this lack of skills. The thesis uses two research methods to investigate the training needs regular classroom teachers feel they have in order to prepare them for mainstreaming. A questionnaire survey was conducted requiring secondary school teachers to indicate their training priorities for mainstreaming. A case study was conducted using progressive interviews to focus on the experiences of nine secondary school teachers during their first year of mainstreaming and particularly on changes in their perceived training needs. Results show that relatively few teachers have received training for mainstreaming, although the majority of teachers surveyed feel such training is important. Training needs were seen to fall into three main categories. Those associated with classroom management were rated as most important, followed by training areas associated with addressing individual needs. Training in theoretical issues was seen as least important. The perceived training needs of the teachers in the case study changed during the course of the year. Initially, training needs associated with classroom management and those associated with meeting individual needs were given equal priority. By the end of the year teachers' focus was on training to address the individual needs of mainstreamed students. The implications of these results on the design and delivery of in-service training activities related to mainstreaming is discussed. Teachers in the case study also raised other issues and concerns which affected the quality of the mainstream placement. In particular the concerns were related to inadequate information about the individual needs and goals of mainstreamed students and their Individualised Educational Programmes.

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