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**BARRIERS TO SCHOOL INCLUSION:
AN INVESTIGATION INTO THE EXCLUSION OF
DISABLED STUDENTS FROM AND WITHIN
NEW ZEALAND SCHOOLS**

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ABSTRACT

Research evidence suggests that disabled students are experiencing forms of exclusion from and within schools, however little is known of the nature of this phenomenon. This study investigated the nature of school exclusion in relation to disabled students. It sought to uncover the factors that exclude disabled students from and within schools, and make recommendations to reduce and eliminate these factors.

Using a grounded theory methodology, this research investigated the nature of school exclusion. It explored parents of disabled student's views about their children's experiences of school exclusion both from school, and within school. The themes identified by parents were then further investigated with school principals, teachers, teacher aides and school students.

This study revealed that disabled students are being excluded from and within school in New Zealand in a number of ways. These include being denied enrolment and/or full-time attendance at school; being denied access to, and participation within the curriculum; being bullied; inappropriate teacher and/or principal beliefs and practices in relation to funding; a lack of caring, valuing and responsibility by school staff; limited teacher knowledge and understanding; poor relationships between parents and school staff; and exclusionary beliefs and practices in relation to teacher aides.

Based on the findings of the study, four propositions were put forward to explain why disabled students are being excluded from and within school. These are that disabled students are considered to be less entitled to human rights than non-disabled students; that there is a lack of school accountability in relation to legal and human rights obligations to disabled students; that inclusive education is predicated on issues of funding and resourcing; and that there is prejudice towards disabled students.

Based on the findings of *how* and *why* disabled students are excluded from and within school, prompts for classroom teachers and school principals/senior management staff were developed in seven areas shown to be important to this phenomenon. These areas are access, accountability, attitudes, knowledge, responsibility, and funding and

resourcing. The prompts are intended to help guide attention and discussion to the issues that are important if exclusion is to be reduced and eliminated. As well as this, recommendations are made for government and government agencies outlining ways that they can contribute to the reduction and elimination of school exclusion for disabled students.

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