

Media release
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MORE THAN 100 NZ SECONDARY SCHOOLS FAIL TO SEEK SACS FOR STUDENTS

More than 100 New Zealand secondary schools last year failed to make a single application for special assistance at NCEA exam time for their students with learning differences, according to latest NZQA figures.

With today (Monday 14 March) the closing date for 2016 SAC applications on the basis of learning difference, the 2015 figures also paint a stark picture of no progress in closing the huge equity gap between high and low decile schools in applying for SACs.

The figures, released to DFNZ by NZQA, provide topline data on application for special assessment conditions (SACs) in 2015. SACs, whereby students are granted accommodations such as reader or writer assistance, computer use, or extra time, are critical to NCEA success for students with learning differences such as dyslexia.

Overall, total SAC applications increased by 27% in 2015, up from 5544 students to 7039. However, 23% (108) of New Zealand's 466 secondary schools made no SAC applications for any of the 7541 students that attend those schools. In addition, the equity gap between high and low decile schools continues, with high decile schools rapidly growing their SAC candidate numbers year on year.

Guy Pope-Mayell, DFNZ Chair of Trustees, says the overall increase in total SAC applications is very pleasing, exceeding DFNZ's target of a 20% increase year on year. However, the figures also detail issues that need to be urgently addressed.

"NZQA has really stepped up with proactive changes that make it easier for schools to engage in the SACs process, with acceptance of school based evidence being the number one change in this area. However, the bad news is that the equity gap between high and low decile schools remains as wide as ever.

"High decile schools are rapidly growing their SAC candidate numbers and, at this rate, low decile schools have little chance of catching up. In addition, the 108 secondary schools with no SAC applications are not even in the game yet," he says.

"The equity gap is also reflected in the make-up of the 108 schools with no SAC applications, with half of these (53 schools) falling into decile 2 and under."

The percentage increases for SAC applicants against total NCEA students in both decile 1 and decile 10 schools was 1.5% in 2015, showing no change in the equity gap. The number of SAC applications made by decile 1 schools increased to about 2% of total NCEA students in 2015, up from 0.5% in 2014. The decile 10 rate for SAC applications increased to 8%, up from 6.4% in 2014.

"Until low decile schools can more rapidly increase their rate of growth in SAC applications, the equity gap between high and low decile schools will never be bridged," Pope-Mayell says.

"For students with learning differences, SACs can make all the difference between achieving or not achieving NCEA qualifications. Sadly, students at low decile schools

remain at an enormous disadvantage in this area, with lack of SAC applications constituting a systemic barrier to achievement.”

Figures from the top ten schools indicate just how many students may be missing out on SAC exam help across the board.

“If the average rate of approved SAC applications from the top ten schools by total SAC candidates (7.95%) was applied to all deciles, then nearly 14,000 NCEA candidates should have had SAC. With the actual SACs figure at 7039 it seems there are potentially close to 7000 more students out there who would have benefitted from SAC assistance. And, from what we know about the impact of SACs on NCEA results, that’s nearly 7000 more students who may have achieved NCEA when they would otherwise fail, or have achieved a higher endorsement level,” Pope-Mayell says.

The top ten schools by total number of SAC approvals were:

- St Kentigern College. Decile 10. Approved NCEA SAC candidates, 129 out of total 983 NCEA candidates, or 13.4%
- St Andrew's College. Decile 10. Approved NCEA SAC candidates, 113 out of total 636 NCEA candidates, or 18.1%
- Te Aho o Te Kura Pounamu. Decile 99*. Approved NCEA SAC candidates, 104 out of total 3581 NCEA candidates, or 2.9%
- Diocesan School for Girls. Decile 10. Approved NCEA SAC candidates, 103 out of total 639 NCEA candidates, or 16.4%
- Burnside High School. Decile 8. Approved NCEA SAC candidates, 96 out of total 1574 NCEA candidates, or 6.2%
- Mt Albert Grammar School. Decile 7. Approved NCEA SAC candidates, 91 out of total 1764 NCEA candidates, or 5.3%
- Green Bay High School. Decile 8. Approved NCEA SAC candidates, 89 out of total 808 NCEA candidates, or 11.1%
- Kristin School. Decile 10. Approved NCEA SAC candidates, 86 out of total 513 NCEA candidates, or 17.3%
- Paraparaumu College. Decile 8. Approved NCEA SAC candidates, 78 out of total 707 NCEA candidates, or 11.2%
- King’s College. Decile 10. Approved NCEA SAC candidates, 77 out of total 335 NCEA candidates, or 23.3%

Top 10 average percentage of SAC approvals: 7.95%

*Decile 99 is a category of school which has not been allocated a decile by the Ministry of Education, including those private schools which opt not to be part of the decile system, new schools and correspondence schools.

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For further information, please contact DFNZ Chair of Trustees Guy Pope-Mayell, 0275 449 496, guy@dfnz.org.nz

ABOUT DYSLEXIA FOUNDATION NEW ZEALAND

DFNZ’s mission is to increase the awareness, recognition, understanding and acceptance of dyslexia as an alternative way of thinking. DFNZ is focused on action-oriented activities to champion change for dyslexic individuals, and on providing information, tools and resources to inspire others to do the same.

Since inception in November 2006, DFNZ has built its reputation on successful advocacy and action. From lobbying the Government for dyslexia to be officially recognised, achieved in 2007, through to working closely with the Government on the inclusive education agenda, the landscape of dyslexia has been fundamentally changed. DFNZ remains remain fully engaged with the education agenda. In parallel, it has activated a second agenda of youth justice and is backing proposals to raise the Youth Court age from its current level of 16 years.