

INQUIRY INTO THE EDUCATION OF STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY OR SPECIAL NEEDS IN GOVERNMENT AND NON-GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

QUESTION (transcript page 28)

Should there be a requirement for the department to be effectively making information and skills sharing network available and resourcing it?

ANSWER

Staff in NSW public schools have access to a range of formal and informal information and skill sharing networks.

These include the following examples:

- Every principal belongs to a local network of principals supported by a Director, Public Schools NSW. Directors Public Schools NSW provide educational leadership and support for principals' professional learning and capability building to enhance their leadership skills and professional practice in the school and to guide principals through the learning and business systems that support local decision making. They also facilitate the development and maintenance of professional networks of school leaders across communities of schools including aspiring leaders and induction of new leaders.
- Within local principal networks, principals and their school executive meet to discuss and share information on relevant topics as and when needed. Local School Service and state office consultants are in regular attendance at network meetings, in addition to Directors Public Schools NSW, providing advice, information and support.
- The department encourages the establishment and maintenance of effective relationships between schools and local government agencies, councils and various community groups, to enable discussion and information sharing about progress on programs and initiatives and to resolve sensitive or complex issues where they arise. Directors Public Schools NSW work to support the development and implementation of localised whole of government initiatives.
- The department distributes information about policies, procedures and professional learning opportunities through formal memorandums and circulars, the department's Public Schools NSW intranet and SchoolBiz, a weekly communication tool to all staff that represents the primary internal channel for business communication with school staff.

- Specialist staff supporting students and schools facilitate a range of formal and informal professional networks. For example, Senior Psychologists Education organise regular school counselling team meetings to engage in professional learning, share information and innovative practices to better meet the needs of students. Additionally, local committees established by school counselling staff hold regular conferences to further develop their skills and stay engaged with developments in their profession.

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QUESTION (transcript page 29)

Request for information about the number of Schools for Specific Purposes in the Tamworth operational directorate and whether they are of a similar standard to the school visited by the Committee in Lismore.

ANSWER

There are 18 Schools for Specific Purposes, including an Educational Training Unit in a Juvenile Justice Centre and a hospital school in the Tamworth operational directorate.

The schools range in size between 3 and 10 classes.

These schools support different students with a range of different disabilities or behaviour disorders, and as such is it not possible to make direct comparisons to the school visited in Lismore.

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QUESTION (transcript page 30)

Information about how many principals there are in the Tamworth operational directorate and how many of them have done training on the Disability Standards for Education.

ANSWER

There are 608 schools and principals in the Tamworth operational directorate.

Of these, 416 principals have completed or are participating in training on the Disability Standards for Education through courses provided by the department. This includes 376 who have completed a course and 40 that are in progress as at end June 2017.

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QUESTION (transcript page 30-31)

Information about funding allocated to NSW public schools for professional learning and whether this includes an increment for regional schools.

ANSWER

Funding is distributed to all NSW public schools to support professional learning for all staff. The funding is based on full time equivalent (FTE) teachers with a weighting (loading) for school type and remoteness (location).

In addition, the department's Resource Allocation Model delivers funding to approximately 1,000 NSW public schools to recognise disadvantage due to distance from other schools and their capacity to interact for staff professional learning.

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QUESTION (transcript page 31)

Information about the data that may be available to indicate schools' participation in disability-related training.

ANSWER

Details about course participants, including school or place of work, enrolment and completion status in each course is available for training courses provided by the department for staff in NSW public schools on the Disability Standards for Education and the supported online learning courses on aspects of disability. The data can be organised by school, principal network and operational areas of New South Wales.

In addition to this course-specific information, the department has an extensive learning management system that captures professional learning activities offered to staff in NSW public schools and the take up by staff, known as MyPL. This system records participation and completion of mandatory and self-selected courses. Staff are able to actively search and select courses that support professional development, including teaching students with disability, and this data can be reported at school, network and organisational level.

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QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

QUESTION (transcript page 33)

Numbers of staff participating in professional learning on supporting students with disability in the Tamworth operational directorate and the value of the training.

ANSWER

Disability Standards in Education training

As at end June 2017, 17,168 individual staff within the Tamworth operational directorate have accessed department-provided training on the Disability Standards in Education. This includes 12,181 staff who have completed one or more course and 4,987 courses that are in progress.

These courses are designed as an introduction to the legislation, the rights of students and obligations of education providers, and related implications for all schools and staff. The value of this training is in providing all NSW public school staff with access to consistent introductory training that can be undertaken at participants' own pace to support their knowledge and understanding of obligations under the (Commonwealth) *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and related Disability Standards for Education. The courses are provided through modules that are tailored for different school contexts and staff roles (including education leaders, teachers working at different stages of education and for school learning support officers) which allows a wide range of participants to consider the implications of the Standards within their own school.

Evaluations undertaken by staff after course completion show that staff report an increased understanding of their obligations to students with disability.

Supported online learning courses

As at end June 2017, 5,767 individual staff within the Tamworth operational directorate, have undertaken one or more of the seven supported online learning courses offered by the department that support the teaching of students with disability. These staff have undertaken 9,034 individual courses.

The value of this training is in providing all NSW public school staff with access to professional learning that extends their knowledge and skills as teachers in meeting diverse student learning and support needs through a blend of small group learning and self-paced learning online, supported by a tutor. The structure of these courses enables participants to engage in supported professional discussion and share experiences and to apply learning through the duration of a course over 10 to 12 weeks.

Further detailed information about these courses and their impact is provided in response to supplementary question 6 following the Newcastle hearing of this inquiry.

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QUESTION (transcript page 34)

Information provided to the Committee about alleged changes to the requirement for inclusion of a special education unit in pre-service teacher education programs in New South Wales.

ANSWER

The NSW Educational Standards Authority (NESA) is responsible for teacher accreditation requirements in New South Wales including requirements for initial teacher education programs.

<http://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/teacher-accreditation/how-accreditation-works/higher-ed-providers-ite/teaching-programs-accredited/prepare-programs-for-submission>