



Education  
& Training

RECEIVED

25 MAY 2010

GPSC's

The Hon Robyn Parker MLC  
Committee Chair  
General Purpose Standing committee No. 2  
Parliament House,  
Macquarie Street,  
SYDNEY NSW 2000

MT 10/736

Dear Ms Parker

I am writing in response to your letter of 12 May 2010, to the Director-General, Department of Education and Training, Mr Michael Coutts-Trotter, requesting further information to inform the inquiry into the provision of education to students with a disability or special needs. The Director-General has asked me to respond on his behalf.

I enclose answers to the Committee's specific questions, however the Department does not have the data requested in Question 9.

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this enquiry.

Yours sincerely

Deonne Smith  
**GENERAL MANAGER, ACCESS AND EQUITY**  
25 May 2010

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

**INQUIRY INTO THE PROVISION OF EDUCATION TO STUDENTS WITH A  
DISABILITY OR SPECIAL NEEDS**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE**

**QUESTION**

1. (a) Are all teachers able to access the online training modules available to School Learning Support Teachers (SLSTs)?  
(b) Can School Learning Support Officers (SLSOs) also access online training? If not, what measures are you taking to ensure that SLSOs are appropriately trained?

**ANSWER**

(a) Yes.

(b) Yes.

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

**INQUIRY INTO THE PROVISION OF EDUCATION TO STUDENTS WITH A  
DISABILITY OR SPECIAL NEEDS**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE**

**QUESTION**

2. (a) What independent evaluations of the online training program have taken place? (b) Have you consulted local experts and academics in the different disability areas (for example, Autism Spectrum Disorder, language and communication, behaviour) to inform your training package? If not, why not?

**ANSWER**

(a) A pilot of the first online course developed and implemented in the United Kingdom was independently evaluated in 2001. In New South Wales, the content of speech/language and motor coordination courses were reviewed by relevant allied health professionals prior to their use by the Department. Data from the online training program was included in an independent review of the school learning support coordinator program in 2009.

(b) Yes.

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

**INQUIRY INTO THE PROVISION OF EDUCATION TO STUDENTS WITH A  
DISABILITY OR SPECIAL NEEDS**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE**

**QUESTION**

3. What criteria must a student meet in order to access a School Learning Support Team? Are these teams only established for students with a confirmed disability and/or additional learning needs?

**ANSWER**

Students are referred by their teachers to a learning support team when additional advice or support is required. Each school determines its processes for referral to the school learning support team.

## **LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

### **INQUIRY INTO THE PROVISION OF EDUCATION TO STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY OR SPECIAL NEEDS**

#### **QUESTION ON NOTICE**

##### **QUESTION**

4. What guidelines or policies are principals/regional directors required to follow in allocating funds to students with disabilities or special needs?

##### **ANSWER**

Specific funding for students with disabilities or additional learning needs can come from a range of sources including socio-economic funding, Aboriginal funding, multicultural funding and student welfare funding; as well as special education funding. Each funding source has its own guidelines for supporting students.

Targeted funding for students with disabilities enrolled in regular classes is provided specifically through the Integration, Funding Support Program. In addition, funding for students with additional learning needs is provided through the Learning Assistance Program. Each of these programs has support materials available on the Department's website.

In accordance with the department's policy, *Leading and Managing the School*, principals are accountable for most aspects of a school's functioning including educational leadership, educational programs, staff welfare and resource management, including funding allocations for students with disabilities. The performance of principals is appraised annually through the Principal Assessment and Review Schedule.

In addition, internal audits are conducted in schools by a member of the department's School Audit Team on a regular basis. Internal audits review the school's finances, assets management, occupational health and safety management, payroll, staffing and enrolments.

For students with confirmed disabilities who access additional support, there is further accountability through the annual student review process, where each student who receives additional support through targeted funding or from school or regional resources, has their support program and outcomes reviewed. This transparent accountability process is undertaken by school and regional personnel and involves the student's parents or carers.

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

**INQUIRY INTO THE PROVISION OF EDUCATION TO STUDENTS WITH A  
DISABILITY OR SPECIAL NEEDS**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE**

**QUESTION**

5. What accountability of transparency processes are in place to ensure that funding allocations for students with disabilities or special needs are allocated to those students by principals/regional directors?

**ANSWER**

See response to Question 4.

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

**INQUIRY INTO THE PROVISION OF EDUCATION TO STUDENTS WITH A  
DISABILITY OR SPECIAL NEEDS**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE**

**QUESTION**

6. Can principals/regional directors allocate the schools' general base funding to support students with disabilities or special needs?

**ANSWER**

Yes, principals can.

## **LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

### **INQUIRY INTO THE PROVISION OF EDUCATION TO STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY OR SPECIAL NEEDS**

#### **QUESTION ON NOTICE**

##### **QUESTION**

7. What are the key challenges for schools and principals for allocating funding to students with disabilities and special needs? How can these be overcome?

##### **ANSWER**

Funding is allocated to schools through different streams. These can include, general funding, special education funding, socio-economic funding, Aboriginal funding, multicultural funding and student welfare funding. Some of these funding streams are linked to National Partnerships.

Where schools access targeted funding for students with disabilities and additional learning needs, it is allocated to schools based on learning outcomes as well as the specific assessed needs of individual students.

Principals and schools have the responsibility of utilising the total available funding to provide learning opportunities for all students including support for students with disabilities and additional learning needs.

The key challenges focus on how principals and schools integrate all their available funding to support the learning needs of every student including students with disabilities and additional learning needs.

Critical to overcoming any challenges is the pivotal role of the school learning support team in long term planning, communicating with the key stakeholders, including parents, and providing a coordinated response to the student's current and future additional learning needs.

Principals and school learning support teams are supported by appropriate professional learning and by regional and state personnel including specific program consultants as well as their own school education directors.



## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

### INQUIRY INTO THE PROVISION OF EDUCATION TO STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY OR SPECIAL NEEDS

#### QUESTION ON NOTICE

#### QUESTION

8. In an answer to a previous question on notice (Question 15), the Department states that the individual education plans may be developed to meet individual needs where appropriate.
- How does the Department determine when development of an IEP for a student is required or appropriate?
  - How many students in NSW schools have Individual Education Plans?
  - What is the process for developing an Individual Education Plan?
  - Are there guidelines for the development of these Plans? What guidance is given to teachers in the development of IEPs?

#### ANSWER

- a. An Individual Education Plan (IEP) may be developed where:
- a student is at risk of not progressing to their next stage of learning; and/or
  - a student has learning needs that require access to content and competencies that are at a different level from their age peer group.
- b. The Department does not aggregate data on the number of students who have an Individual Education Plan.
- c. Developing an Individual Education Plan is a collaborative process which involves parents or carers, the student (where appropriate), class teacher/year advisor and other people who have significant knowledge of the student for example specialist teachers, parents, learning support personnel and regional personnel as appropriate.
- This team meets to discuss and make decisions about curriculum options and adjustments to enable a student to access the curriculum and associated learning experiences. These decisions are consistent with the department's *Curriculum Planning, Programming, Assessing and Reporting to Parents K-12* policy.
- d. Yes. The School Learning Support Team, support teachers learning assistance, itinerant support teachers, specialist staff and regional student services

personnel, including Disability Programs Consultants are available to assist schools and their teachers with the development of Individual Education Plans.

**LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL**

**INQUIRY INTO THE PROVISION OF EDUCATION TO STUDENTS WITH A  
DISABILITY OR SPECIAL NEEDS**

**QUESTION ON NOTICE**

**QUESTION**

9. How many schools offered the Life Skills courses in NSW in 2009

**ANSWER**

The Department of Education and Training does not have this data.

