

**DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
MANAGING DIRECTOR OF TAFE NSW**

NEW SOUTH WALES
DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION
AND TRAINING



The Hon R M Parker MLC
Legislative Council
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

MT10/485

Dear Ms Parker

I refer to your letter of 30 March 2010 with additional questions on notice from Committee members in relation to the **Inquiry into the provision of education to students with a disability or special needs.**

Please find attached the answers to these questions and I thank you for raising them with me.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Coutts-Trotter'.

Michael Coutts-Trotter
**DIRECTOR-GENERAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING
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23 April 2010

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

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

QUESTION ON NOTICE

QUESTION

1. Of the \$1.1 billion special education budget quoted in the Department's submission, what percentage is provided by the Commonwealth versus the NSW Government?

ANSWER

Since 1 January 2009, Commonwealth funding for individual targeted education programs is aggregated into the National Schools Specific Purpose Payment. It is not possible to separate State and Commonwealth funding at the program level.

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2. There has been some confusion in evidence received by the Committee as to what the primary role of a school counsellor should be. Can you please clarify the role of a school counsellor in NSW Government schools?

ANSWER

School counsellors support students by undertaking three key activities (assessment, counselling and collaborative support, including referral to other agencies) in two major areas of concern (students with complex learning problems and students with mental health problems). The school counsellor brings a psychological perspective to these activities and areas of concern and is able to make a significant contribution to the understanding of the factors impacting on a student's learning outcomes. This understanding informs the development of appropriate programs to meet the identified needs of students as well as provide a classification of their disability status under the Department of Education and Training criteria for access to support from the department's specialised disability services.

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3. Some submissions have suggested that funds allocated to schools for special education are being spent on other outcomes such as improving NAPLAN results and not on the education of those students within the school who have a disability or special needs. What scope does a school have to use the funds it has been allocated for specific purposes? Who is responsible for ensuring that special education funds are being spent on the needs of the student with a disability?

ANSWER

In NSW Government schools, principals have key responsibility for determining the most appropriate ways of using the total annual funding allocated to their schools to address the identified learning needs of students.

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4. Section 20 of the *Education Act 1990* was amended in 2008 by the Education Amendment (Educational Support for Children with Significant Learning Difficulties) Bill to expand the definition of Government school children with special needs to include “children with significant learning difficulties” instead of only children with disabilities. How has the Department responded to this legislative change?

ANSWER

The amendment to section 20 of the Education Act 1990 gave specific recognition of the Minister for Education’s power to provide special assistance to children with significant learning difficulties.

At law, this group of students was recognised prior to the amendment of the Education Act by both the NSW *Anti Discrimination Act 1977* and the Commonwealth *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. As a consequence, the Department already had in place a range of services and programs aimed at supporting students with significant learning difficulties. These are detailed in the NSW Government’s submission.

Since 2008 there has been across the Department a specific focus on supporting the needs of students with learning difficulties. This work has included the following key actions; appointment of literacy and numeracy teachers, expansion of Reading Recovery, implementation of the Best Start Initiative in all schools, the establishment of the School Learning Support Coordinator initiative in 265 schools as well as the development and trialling of the School Learning Support Program. The Department has also embarked on the implementation of online training for teachers working with children with additional needs in schools across the state.

The work since 2008 has supplemented a range of initiatives previously developed by the Department for students with learning difficulties. These include resources for teachers and school learning support teachers to assist students with additional needs in reading, writing and spelling.

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5. There have been suggestions about how to improve the disability/special needs assessment process including:
- a. Limiting the role of a school counsellor to carrying out disability/special needs assessment only and providing social workers to take on the role of general student welfare (see transcript of evidence 22 March 2010, pp16, 37-38 and 23 March 2010, p56).
 - b. Contracting out the disability/special needs assessment to private psychologists (see transcript of evidence 22 March 2010, p74).
- What is the Department's view of these suggestions?

ANSWER

- a. Limiting the role of the school counsellor to disability/special needs assessment only would significantly under utilise the expertise, experience and skills of the school counsellor. The psychological input from school counsellors informs the provision of effective educational programs to students with additional learning needs arising from social, emotional, behavioural, family and mental health concerns, regardless of disability status. As well, they advise on general student welfare issues, facilitate referrals to other agencies, liaise with parents, and contribute to the identification and support of gifted and talented students. The time spent by the school counsellor on disability assessment and general welfare activities is determined by the school principal.

Over the last ten years the Department has invested in training school counsellors through the School-Link Initiative (a collaborative program with NSW Health) in the assessment and support of students with mental health problems. This investment has increased the capacity of student counsellors to provide support to students with mental health problems. To narrow the school counsellors to a disability assessment role would have significant implications for the support of students with mental health problems that are impacting on many students.

- b. An essential component of effective support for students with disabilities in the Department's assessment process is the insight and understanding of the individual student's disability on their capacity to access and benefit from their educational programs that is gained by the school counsellor when doing the

assessment. This understanding then informs the identification of the support needed for the student to be able to access that educational program. Once these supports have been identified then the process of considering and then accessing the Department's specialist disability services may be initiated.

Outsourcing the disability assessment would break this essential link between assessment and knowledge of a school systems and resources, parental resources, and possible options for teaching and learning to meet the student's needs. This view is supported by the literature (see for example: Faulkner, M (2007) *School psychologists or psychologists in school?* InPsych: The Bulletin of the Australian Psychological Society Ltd).

In other jurisdictions where disability assessment is outsourced informal feedback suggests that a lack of school and home contextual information in the assessment process can result in the need for re-assessment to enable appropriate school support to be provided.

In previous times the Department employed 'Mental Survey Testers' who carried out cognitive testing of students to determine access to special classes. This practice was discontinued because it was recognised that breaking the link between the local school counsellor undertaking the assessment and identifying need led to inappropriate placements and failure to fully identify and address the learning needs of students with disabilities.

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6. There have been suggestions in submissions for allied health teams to be part of schools or the Department. What is the Department's view of this suggestion?

ANSWER

The Department of Education and Training does not have legislative responsibility for providing health services nor the necessary structures to provide appropriate clinical supervision or career development opportunities for health professionals. However, the Department strongly supports effective collaborative arrangements with health providers where this facilitates or enhances access to relevant allied health services for students.

The Department has established constructive working relationships with NSW Health and Ageing Disability and Home Care. In particular, the Department works with NSW Health on ways of strengthening the support for schools through strategies such as School Link. The Department engages in ongoing collaboration with NSW Health and Ageing Disability and Home Care to effect continuous improvement in the delivery of allied health services for students.

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7. What role does assistive technology play in supporting students with disabilities or special needs? What is the current access to this technology in Government schools? Submissions have suggested that this access is limited. How can this be improved?

ANSWER

Assistive technology can enable or enhance student education where it is tailored and specific to the individual student and the learning outcomes that they are seeking to achieve. It includes a wide range of low and high tech strategies, products, devices or equipment used to support the functional capabilities of students with a disability, particularly in relation to communication, such as pencil grips, sloped writing boards, symbol based communication systems, electronic communication devices, computer software and switches.

In New South Wales, specialist equipment that supports people with a disability, including assistive technology, is provided through a range of services and programs external to the Department of Education and Training. These include programs administered by Enable NSW and the Lifetime Care and Support Authority.

In addition, the Department of Education and Training provides funds annually to regions to support schools in the purchase of specialised services and equipment for students with a disability, including specialist assistive technology services provided by Northcott Society and The Spastic Centre. These funds are managed through local regional processes. Specialist personnel are also able to advise schools about assistive technology options and new developments in technology for individual students.

The Department is working with Northcott Society and The Spastic Centre to develop enhanced systems for identifying and responding to student need for assistive technology to support their access to education activities.

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8. Can you please provide the Committee with an update on the impending closure of the Dalwood Assessment Centre and how this impacts on children with disabilities and special needs from rural and regional areas?

ANSWER

Dalwood Assessment Centre falls within the jurisdiction of NSW Health.

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9. Is there a separation of roles and responsibilities between the DET and the State Government considering the NSW Government lodged Submission No. 715 but is represented by DET employees during these hearings?

ANSWER

The NSW Government submission covers all relevant Government agencies, including the Department of Education and Training.

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10. Is the Minister for Education and Training familiar with the entire content of the NSW Government submission?

ANSWER

Yes.

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11. You claim that over the last seven years there has been a 10% average yearly increase in NSW Government expenditure on students with a disability or additional learning needs attending Government schools. Has this increase met the needs of these students?
 - a. What has been the percentage and monetary increase in funding from the NSW Government for non-government schools over this same period of time?

ANSWER

The increase in the Department of Education and Training's expenditure on special education reflects the increasing demand for services from students with confirmed disabilities. That is, as the number of these students increase, so too does funding. Increased funding has enabled special classes, support in regular classes and specific itinerant services to be maintained.

- a. Funding for non-government schools is provided by the Department of Education and Training. During the period 2003/04 to 2009/10 it is estimated that funding provided to non-government schools on behalf of students with disabilities will have increased by \$30.5 million or 98 per cent.

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12. Of the \$900 million of the \$1,100 million total budget that was claimed by the Director General of Education and Training as being demand driven by a “disability confirmation and a choice by a parent to commit their children to public education”, is the DET confident that all disability confirmations are met in full?
- a. If not, how much extra funding would the DET require to fully address the needs of every disability confirmation?

ANSWER

Yes.

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13. It was stated that of the 10% increase in the public education budget last year “a lot of that money is additional funding under national partnerships that directly targets schools based on an assessment of need, which includes importantly need as determined by the children's results in literacy and numeracy assessments.”
- a. How long will this National Partnership funding continue? What affect will this have on the public education budget in the future?

ANSWER

The total funding period for the three Smarter Schools National Partnerships (Literacy and Numeracy, Improving Teacher Quality and Low Socioeconomic Status School Communities) is 2008/9 – 2014/5.

Literacy and Numeracy Partnership funding is for a four year period, Improving Teacher Quality Partnership is for a five year period and Low SES School Communities Partnership is for a seven year period.

Each Partnership receives facilitation funding comprising new Commonwealth funding, plus additional and existing state funding.

Improving Teacher Quality and Literacy and Numeracy Partnerships also receive Commonwealth reward funding that is tied to meeting performance targets. There are no reward payments for the Low SES School Communities National Partnership.

Funding details are provided below.

Smarter Schools National Partnerships	Facilitation (\$m)	Reward (\$m)	Total (\$m)
Literacy and Numeracy	81.60	95.20	176.80
Improving Teacher Quality	39.56	112.06	151.62
Low SES School Communities	1,186.45	-	1,186.45
Totals	1,307.61	207.26	1,514.87

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14. As per p19 of the Government's submission from 2003 to 2009 the increase in the incidence of mental health and autism rose by 75% and 165% respectively.
- a. Has funding for these students increased proportionally over the same period of time?
 - b. If not, what evidence does the DET have that the learning needs of students identified with mental health disorders and autism are fully met?

ANSWER

- a. The funding has increased more than proportionately to enrolment grants. The percentage increase in the funding of 128% for students with mental health issues and 189% for students with autism reflects not only the number of students, but also of the complexity of their conditions.

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15. Is the DET meeting “their obligations under the Commonwealth Standards for Education (2005) for students to participate at school on the same basis as other students”?
- What criteria/analysis/measure is used to prove this?
 - What criteria are in place to ensure resources supposedly available in a region or centre to support access to the curriculum for students with special needs are actually available to the student?
 - What waiting times or conditions (eg. travel time) are considered acceptable to meet access expectations for resource availability?

ANSWER

The Department of Education and Training makes every reasonable attempt to discharge its legal obligations to students with disabilities in Government schools under the Commonwealth *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and the Commonwealth Disability Standards for Education 2005.

- Compliance with the Department’s legal obligations cannot be measured without proper regard to the individual needs of the student. These individual needs are met by a variety of means including, where appropriate, additional funding, providing special equipment or specially prepared materials (such as large print and Braille) where appropriate, the development of individual education plans where required and the creation of a positive learning environment. Progress and support needs of individual students with a disability accessing specialist services and programs are reviewed annually.
- School principals, through their learning support teams, are responsible for ensuring that a student’s additional learning needs are identified and addressed to support their access to the curriculum. Student progress is monitored through a wide range of curriculum assessments. These include school specific assessments and national testing conducted in years 3, 5, 7 and 9. Reporting to parents on these assessments occurs regularly. Results from these assessments are used at school and systemic levels to determine student progress and inform assessment of student need and planning for additional support for students with special needs.

- c. Reasonable access to additional support resources for students with special needs must be measured with regard to the individual needs of the student. Individual student needs are met in a variety of ways through a wide range of services and programs as indicated above. Provision of these additional resources services are subject to a wide range of local contextual issues.

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16. What plans are in place to support teachers to cope with the increases in special needs students in public schools?
- a. Are any of the following planned:
- i. additional specialist support teachers,
 - ii. smaller class sizes,
 - iii. increased release from face to face teaching,
 - iv. representations to the Institute of Teachers for improvements to pre-service training,
 - v. greater investment in teacher professional development, and
 - vi. expansion of special classes and SSPs?
- b. What is being planned to support the other students in the class?

ANSWER

- a. (i-vi) The Department of Education and Training is constantly assessing the support it provides to students with a disability and additional learning needs and their teachers by reviewing the programs currently available and reference to the research literature in this area.

The Department is trialling the School Learning Support Program over the next two terms in the Illawarra and South East region. This aim of this proposed model is establish a specialist teacher presence in every school.

The Department uses formulae to allocate teachers to schools and the formulae for class sizes in special education have regard to the type of disability or special need of the students within schools.

Most recently the Department has provided additional support to teaching principals for the majority of our smallest primary schools. The Department will continue to look at ways to further support teachers to undertake their roles.

One of the responsibilities of the NSW Institute of Teachers is to assure both the profession and the community of the quality of teacher education programs. The Institute does this through the approval of programs offered by providers of initial teacher education. The approval process is through the

Initial Teacher Education Committee (ITEC). The ITEC is appointed by the Quality Teaching Council and comprises members with particular expertise. The department's representative on the ITEC is the Director, Human Resources Policy and Planning.

By the end of 2010, the ITEC is expected to have undertaken the process of reviewing all initial teacher education programs offered in NSW (approximately 160 programs) to ensure that these programs meet all of the Institute's requirements and that graduates have demonstrated all of the Graduate Teacher Standards and the mandatory areas of study which includes special education.

Further, the department is contributing to the development of National Professional Standards for Teachers through the Institute's consultation processes. NSW is the only state in Australia that requires initial teacher education to include a dedicated unit on educating students with special needs. The department will put forward the need for this mandatory area of study to be maintained in the national system.

The Department provides \$36 million teacher professional learning funds directly to schools to strengthen the capacity of their teachers and school leaders to improve the learning outcomes for all students and meet the key targets articulated in their school plans. Further to this, professional learning specific to teaching students with a disability or special needs will continue to be an area of focus, particularly the provision of online learning. While maintaining the longest public school year in Australia, the Department has increased school development days from three to five a year.

The establishment and location of special classes and positions are part of the annual process of regional planning for special education. Every year, the department conducts through its regions an analysis of students with confirmed disabilities across the state to determine the demand for, and location of, special education services. This process includes consultation with school principals, teachers, parents and relevant school communities.

- b. Teachers develop and provide learning programs to support all students in their classes. They provide accommodations and/or learning adjustments for those students with additional learning needs.

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17. What happens when the number of students with disabilities exceeds the number of places available?

ANSWER

The annual regional planning process for special education determines where services will be best placed for the next school year. Regional placement panels operate an open and transparent process to match specialist services to parent preferences for students with confirmed disabilities.

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18. During the public hearing it was claimed that the Illawarra/South East Region trial is “funding positive”. It was also stated: “It may not work as we intend it to but it is modelled on a very successful program in 265 schools. The evidence to date suggests there is a good chance it will work. (Based on these comments it is likely that the program referred to was the School Learning Support Coordinator program. It was allocated an additional \$9.3 million. It allowed the creation of additional teaching positions to existing schools staffing establishment.) Will the Illawarra/South East region trial be additionally funded to the same or equivalent level as the SLSC program?
a. If not, how can the success of the SLSC program be directly linked to the likely success of the trial if the additional funding is not available for the Illawarra/South East region?”

ANSWER

The *School Learning Support Program* commenced as a trial in Illawarra and South East Region on 19 April 2010. The proposed model builds on the strengths of a number of our existing programs.

In Illawarra and South East Region as a result of this trial 197 schools will increase their total resources and 18 schools will retain their current resources. Six schools where student enrolment has declined will decrease their total resources.

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19. Why did the reference to the School Learning Support Program in the NSW Government's submission (p45) to the inquiry fail to mention that it replaces or downsizes the following programs and services:
- a. Other Support Learning Assistance Programs,
 - b. Language classes,
 - c. Early School Support program (for K,1 & 2 with a mild intellectual disability),
 - d. special reading classes,
 - e. the Itinerant Behaviour Team,
 - f. outreach specialists (for example Autism Spectrum Disorders), and
 - g. funding support for children attracting less than \$6,000 per annum (high support needs children)?

ANSWER

The School Learning Support Program aims to build the capacity of schools to support students with additional learning needs and their class teachers through the presence of a specialist teacher in every regular school.

The model proposes to merge some existing programs and reallocate these resources directly to schools. At the time of writing the submission, the Department of Education and Training was working with stakeholder groups to further develop the School Learning Support Program proposal and move towards a possible trial in one region this year.

Under the proposed model, principals and learning support team teachers will determine the types of expertise that will be required to support students with additional learning needs and their teachers both within their own school and across schools. They will have the opportunity to decide whether a component of their school's notional allocation will be 'pooled' to create an across schools specialist position in an identified area of need.

Principals together with their school learning support team also have the flexibility to contribute a component of their allocation to the operation of a local language or reading class that is supporting the needs of students with reading difficulties and language disorders.

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20. What is the impact on children with special needs of the loss of these services while the trials for the School Learning Support Program are conducted?

ANSWER

There has been extensive consultation in the Illawarra and South East region with school learning support teams and principals to ensure that the needs of students continue to be met throughout this trial,

An important part of the trial of the School Learning Support Program will be the evaluation of this model including feedback from the parents, staff and principals involved.

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21. How will a single 'specialist' teacher be able to advise teachers to cope with children with autism, language disorders, dyslexia, behavioural disorders, reading difficulty, motor coordination problems and other special needs when managing these needs has required many distinct programs in the past?

ANSWER

School Learning Support Teachers work in teams across a network of schools and bring to their teams their specific expertise which they share with each other and their schools.

Extensive and ongoing professional learning will also be available for School Learning Support Teachers.

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22. In regards to the implications of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992, it is the responsibility of the individual school to take steps to avoid discrimination on the basis of disability. What responsibility does the Department and Training to ensure that adjustments and funding is available to ensure schools can comply with the act?

ANSWER

In relation to the Department of Education and Training, the premise of this question is incorrect. While the school is part of the Department and partly exercises that responsibility on behalf of the Department it is not “the responsibility of the individual school to take steps to avoid discrimination”. Under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* it is “unlawful for an educational authority to discriminate against a person on the ground of the person’s disability” (section 22(1)). “Educational authority” means a body or person administering an educational institution. In the case of NSW Government schools, the body administering them is the Department of Education and Training.

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23. How many cases has the Department of Education and Training settled out of court as a result of alleged breaches of the Disability Discrimination Act?

ANSWER

During the 2009 calendar year, 14 complaints were received from the Australian Human Rights Commission (the Commission) involving allegations made on behalf of Government school students that unlawful discrimination under the Disability Discrimination Act had occurred.

In relation to the matters received from the Commission –

7 were settled by agreement between the complainant and the Department,

1 was withdrawn by the complainant,

3 were terminated by the Commission, and

3 are still pending before the Commission, including one where the matter is awaiting the finalisation of care proceedings taken in respect of the student by officers from Community Services.

To date, none of the matters has resulted in the commencement of legal proceedings by the complainant in either the Federal Magistrates Court or the Federal Court.

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24. Why were students with disabilities in language or with a mild intellectual disability removed from disability funding to the *Learning Assistance Program* when they are recognised under the DET disability criteria.

ANSWER

In 2002 a state-wide review was conducted of programs and provisions supporting students with low support needs. In response to the recommendations of this review an advisory group representing key stakeholders met throughout 2003. The advisory group considered ways to allocate annual funding that would reduce red tape and strengthen the support available for students with mild intellectual disabilities and language disorders.

The Learning Assistance Program was established in 2004 to assist students enrolled in regular classes who are having difficulty in literacy, numeracy and language. It was recommended by the advisory group that funding for students with mild intellectual disability and language disorders be allocated directly to schools on a triennium basis using an index based on state-wide assessment data in literacy and numeracy. The program aims to support students experiencing difficulties in basic areas of learning without the need for confirmation of a student's disability and paperwork.

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25. Why are students with multiple disabilities only funded for one?
a. Why are class sizes not flexible to accommodate multiple disabilities?

ANSWER

Students are funded on the basis of their support needs. Through the Department's Integration Funding Support Program a student's level of funding is determined by the student's profile of need across a range of domains including the key learning areas, communication and personal care. The profile will reflect needs related to multiple disabilities where they exist.

- a. Class sizes for students with special needs are flexible and range between 2 for students who are deaf and blind to 18 for students who have a mild intellectual disability and are in a support class in a regular school. In addition, multi-categorical support classes in regular and special schools enrol students on the basis of their factor of need and these classes can range in size from 6 to 10 students depending upon each student's additional learning needs.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE

QUESTION

26. Why were School Learning Support Officers withdrawn from language classes?

ANSWER

Prior to the Government's Special Education Initiative 2005-2007, support classes in regular schools were allocated School Learning Support Officers on the basis of one School Learning Support Officer for every three classes. This situation remains the same for language classes.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE

QUESTION

27. Has there been an assessment of how many students are missing out on much needed language classes because their parents cannot afford the cost of an assessment from a speech therapist?

ANSWER

The Department of Education and Training does not collect data about students' access to therapy services provided by other agencies or private providers.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE

QUESTION

28. What has been the average waiting time for access to speech therapy over the past three years?
- a. How does this waiting time impact on students given the statement on p63 of the Government's submission that "Timely access to therapy is vital..."?

ANSWER

The Department of Education and Training does not collect data about student access to speech therapy services.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE

QUESTION

29. In relation to the position on p66 of the Government's submission that: "The school environment is the key setting for embedding the provision of specialist disability therapy services to support children and young people with a disability":
- a. Of the projects/programs mentioned, most were focussed towards teacher training or on developing other programs, in pilot mode or outside of mainstream schools. How many students with disabilities within mainstream school have had specialty therapy sessions within the last two years?
 - b. How many specialists are actually embedded within a particular school or region and are on call to attend to student needs as required.
 - c. Are any of these therapy services available statewide?

ANSWER

- a. The Department of Education and Training does not collect this data. These services are provided by other Government agencies.
- b. The Department of Education and Training does not directly employ therapy professionals and does not collect this data. However, schools can facilitate the delivery of therapy services within school settings, where relevant, and school principals have flexibility to use school resources to purchase specific services to support students access to education where required, including specific specialist services.
- c. NSW Health and Ageing Disability and Home Care of the Department of Human Services and a number of Government funded NGOs provide a range of therapy services to school aged children statewide.

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QUESTION

30. How long are waiting lists for children with disabilities for each of the support classes on p114 of the Government's submission?

ANSWER

There are no waiting lists. The regional placement panel process manages access to services for students with confirmed disabilities.

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QUESTION

31. Why are there fewer IM class placements available in secondary schools compared to primary schools?

ANSWER

There is capacity for 4,122 students with a mild intellectual disability (IM) in primary schools (K-6) and capacity for 4,221 students with a mild intellectual disability (IM) in secondary schools (7-12).

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QUESTION ON NOTICE

QUESTION

32. Why are principals asked to prioritise their students with disabilities when they require special placement?

ANSWER

Access to specialist provisions for students with a disability provided in NSW Government schools, including placement in support classes in regular or special schools and access to specific regional support services, is through a regional 'placement panel' process. These panels include representation from key personnel including regional staff, specialists and principals. Principals play an important role in facilitating the placement panel process through the detailed knowledge that they bring about the student/s for whom additional support is being sought, as well as the resources available in their schools. For this reason, principals may prioritise their students seeking a specialist service to help inform the panel process in allocating specialist services taking into account availability and suitability of specialist service options.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE

QUESTION

33. Given your submission's figures that 76.8% of students with a disability are educated in Government schools, what measures are in place to ensure that the reputation of Government schools in general and individual schools in particular are not adversely affected by the current emphasis of judging school and teacher performance on the basis of NAPLAN results?

ANSWER

NSW Government schools are inclusive and, as such, the majority of students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, as well as those attending behaviour schools and those learning English as a Second Language are expected to, and do, participate in the NAPLAN tests.

NAPLAN tests are an important diagnostic tool for teachers. The tests help and guide teachers to develop and implement specific strategies to address the individual learning needs of students. The tests also provide valuable information that reflect the support needs of schools and underpin methods to distribute resources to schools, for example under the funding formula for the Learning Assistance Program.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE

QUESTION

34. How much of the \$1.1 billion of DET special education expenditure goes to private school parents through the School Student Special Transport Scheme?

ANSWER

Funding under the School Student Special Transport Scheme is not allocated directly to parents. Transport services provided under the Scheme are managed by the Department of Education and Training's Special Transport Unit, based on the travel support needs of individual students. Payments are made directly to contractors engaged to provide transport services for eligible students with disabilities attending NSW Government and non-government schools. Of the \$1.1 billion for special education, the allocation for the School Student Special Transport Scheme in 2009/10 is \$76.236 million and it is anticipated that approximately 17% of the Scheme's total expenditure will be attributed to support for students attending non-government schools.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE

QUESTION

35. During the public hearing it was stated that Deonne Smith, DET General Manager, Access and Equity, has advised there is currently a review being conducted of the regional placement process.
- Who is conducting the review?
 - What are the terms of reference of this review?
 - Who has been invited to contribute information/evidence to this review?
 - When will a report be available?
 - Will there be an independent analysis?

ANSWER

- A revision of placement panel procedures is being progressed by Disability Programs Directorate as an outcome of the recommendations of the Auditor-General's Performance Audit, *Educating primary school students with disabilities* (2006).
- The revision of placement panel procedures is part of a broader process of review of special education procedures which has already resulted in the implementation of an electronic Support Class Administration System process which monitors student movements in and out of support classes; and the development and the implementation of a revised and online Access Request process which is completed by school learning support teams to seek support for students with special needs and inform placement panels in their decision making.
- Consultation has occurred with key stakeholders including principal and parent groups and regional personnel.
- A report is not required.
- No.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE

QUESTION

36. How many students are enrolled in secondary Behaviour Schools:
- What percentage of these students are taught by qualified subject specific teacher?
 - What percentage of these students have access to secondary subject facilities (eg. Science labs, hospitality rooms, visual arts resources, gyms etc.)
 - What percentage of students leave before completing the school certificate?
 - What percentage of students attempt the school certificate but do not pass?

ANSWER

There are 519 places available in behaviour schools. Behaviour schools operate on a Year 5 to 10 model.

- Behaviour schools, being schools for specific purposes, were not established nor designed to have subject specific teachers. Behaviour schools are established with a non-teaching principal, assistant principal and staff with special education qualifications and/or experience.
- Students of secondary age who are attending behaviour schools have access to secondary subject facilities where appropriate and identified in each student's individual learning or transition plan. Students attending a behaviour school retain their enrolment in their home school. This is known as a shared enrolment. Through this process, students access facilities in both the behaviour school and their home school. Secondary age students are able to access the full range of facilities when attending their regular home school. Behaviour schools also build partnerships with non-government agencies, such as local sport centres and swimming centres, to extend the curriculum and social opportunities available to students.
- Through shared enrolment processes, students progressively meet school certificate course outcomes through curriculum offered in both the behaviour school and their home school. Registration for the school certificate can be facilitated through either school, depending on individual student needs. Data relating to the percentage of students leaving behaviour schools before completing the school certificate cannot be centrally generated.
- The term "do not pass" is not applicable to the school certificate. Any student who attempts the school certificate will receive a record of achievement. The

award will include information, where appropriate, indicating the stage 5 courses that a student has completed and the grade awarded by the student's school for each course.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE

QUESTION

37. What support is available for students returning home or moving to mainstream schools from behaviour schools?

ANSWER

Students attending a behaviour school retain their enrolment in their home school. This is known as a shared enrolment.

Students attending behaviour schools have an individual education and behaviour support plan. This plan is developed collaboratively between the behaviour school and the home school and includes plans for the transition of the student back into the regular school.

Behaviour schools developed local arrangements to support transition with home schools, as well as with community and non-government support agencies. Ongoing support for students is provided by learning support teams in behaviour schools and the home schools. Specialist support is also provided, for example, by school counsellors, mentor programs, web-based communication, out of home care programs, inter school staff visits and exchanges as well as external provider supports.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE

QUESTION

38. What is the average attendance rate in a behaviour school?

ANSWER

It is standard practice for students attending a behaviour school to retain their enrolment in their home school. This practice is known as a shared enrolment.

It is a departmental requirement for schools managing a shared enrolment for the home school to maintain student attendance records. In this case behaviour schools are required to provide regular information to a student's home school so that the record of attendance can be maintained at the home school. This arrangement supports flexible integration opportunities to reflect each student's changing needs.

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QUESTION

39. What are the expectations of the students enrolled in Behaviour Schools when they move from class sizes of 2 (teacher + aide):7 to 1:30 students?

ANSWER

Each behaviour school has teams or individual teachers who, through the student's individual education plan, map and develop integration and transition programs to support students when returning to mainstream settings. Transition planning is always done in close consultation with parents/carers and with significant collaboration with staff at the home or receiving school. The principal of the referring school ensures that there is effective communication between the settings and the learning support team usually coordinates the transition plans and schedules for the returning student.

A range of models are available, for example a student may continue to attend their home school one day per week and attend the behaviour school four days per week. In this model, staff from the behaviour school are able to visit their students at their home school and assist in working with the student's home-school teachers to develop joint support strategies and capacity building within the referring school to assist students experiencing difficulty with their behaviour.

The high ratio of teacher and school learning support officer to students in a behaviour school allows the students to have the individual support they need to develop the skills which will help them succeed in the transition. Due to the small and focused nature of the behaviour schools, ongoing mentoring, school visits and support contact is available for students at every stage of their transition.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE

QUESTION

40. How many students in Emotionally Disturbed (ED) settings begin and end their secondary schooling in this heavily supported environment?
- a. What percentage of these students complete the Secondary Certificate?
 - b. What percentage of these students complete the Higher Secondary Certificate?

ANSWER

The Department of Education and Training has developed and introduced in 2009 a single data management system (the Support Class Administration System) for data collection and analysis. Longitudinal data is not available centrally prior to 2009 for those students who begin and end their secondary schooling in a setting for students with emotional disturbance.

- a. Longitudinal data for these students is not available centrally
- b. Longitudinal data for these student is not available centrally

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QUESTION ON NOTICE

QUESTION

41. Is distance education available for all secondary aged students in behaviour schools or ED settings? a. If not why not?

ANSWER

Yes.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE

QUESTION

42. What is the DET position on the integration of behaviour students and their access to the secondary curriculum?

ANSWER

The Department of Education and Training supports the integration of students accessing behaviour schools in their referring schools. Integration is supported through a range of options developed locally to reflect student needs and through collaborative practice between staff in behaviour schools and referring schools.

Curriculum planning and programming in all schools, including behaviour schools, consider the specific needs of each learner. Accommodations and adjustments to support student learning are made according to individual student need. The NSW Board of Studies curriculum for year 7 to 12 is designed so that all students can access learning outcomes.

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QUESTION

43. How are teachers expected to devise learning programs with the insufficient guidance provided through the Board of Studies non-categorised approach to curriculum provision?

ANSWER

All primary and secondary age students, including those with special needs, work towards the outcomes and content in the syllabuses of the NSW Board of Studies. Depending on the nature of their needs, these students may receive additional support and/or adjustments to enable them to access class work and/or demonstrate achievement of syllabus outcomes. Teachers select and use syllabus outcomes and content that best suits the learning needs of each student.

Teachers use their professional judgment in providing learning opportunities for students. These judgments are based on knowledge of the curriculum, student learning needs and assessment of student learning at both a school and systemic level.

A range of support materials, professional learning programs and personnel is available to assist schools in catering for students with special needs.

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QUESTION

44. Why are there no detailed curriculum documents for students with intellectual disabilities (especially K–10)?

ANSWER

The NSW Board of Studies K–10 curriculum provides for students with special education needs, including students with intellectual disabilities in a variety of ways. The curriculum options available are in recognition that students with special education needs (including students with intellectual disabilities) have a wide range of individual strengths, abilities and needs and that decisions taken in relation to curriculum options should be made according to an individual's learning needs on a course-by-course basis.

Students with special education needs in Years K–10 can access the NSW curriculum (from Years K–6 and Years 7–10 syllabuses) through one or more of the following curriculum options:

- based on outcomes and content at the stage level they are working towards. This may be from a different stage of schooling to their chronological age
- with the support and/or adjustments required to enable them to participate in learning experiences and assessment opportunities.

In addition, the Board has developed Life Skills outcomes and content for students in Years 7–12. Life Skills is a curriculum option designed specifically for students with special education needs who cannot access the regular outcomes and content and is predominantly for students with an intellectual disability. Life Skills provides a more relevant, accessible, meaningful, and age appropriate curriculum option for a small percentage of students. Life Skills outcomes and content are included in each Years 7–10 syllabus and in 8 Stage 6 Life Skills syllabuses. The support document *Life Skills Years 7–10: Advice on Planning, Programming and Assessment* (2004) provides guidance to schools in programming for Life Skills outcomes and content, and includes sample units of work in each key learning area.

The outcomes and content in the Years K–6 syllabuses have been designed to provide scope and flexibility to enable teachers to develop age appropriate, meaningful and relevant learning experiences and assessment opportunities for

students with special education needs (including students with intellectual disabilities) in the context of their whole-class program. In addition to the information provided in each K–6 syllabus, support documents for students with special education needs have been developed for English, Mathematics, Science, Human Society and its Environment (HSIE) and Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE).

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QUESTION

45. What is the percentage of temporary/casual teachers on programs in special education settings?
- a. How are these teachers expected to make appropriate adjustments in curriculum delivery?

ANSWER

In 2009, 264 permanent teachers were recruited into special education positions across the State. School principals would however engage casual staff to cover short term absences and temporary staff, should the leave be for longer periods of time. Casual Direct is the department's automated casual teacher staffing system and locates and engages qualified casual teachers to meet the school's relief needs or schools can use their own network of casual teachers.

- a. The Department provides online induction for casual teachers and support for principals who are responsible for developing an orientation to the school for casual teachers on their arrival to assist them to familiarise themselves with the organisation of the school and the learning needs of students. Supervision and support of casual and temporary staff to make appropriate adjustments for students with special needs is through the school principal and/or executive team.

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QUESTION

46. What is the average counsellor time per school per year?

ANSWER

The Department of Education and Training does not quantify the average amount of school counsellor time per school per year.

There are more than 790 school counsellor positions across the state. The allocation of school counsellor time to individual schools is made on the basis of need and is determined by a regional panel which has principal representatives as well as representatives from the regional staff and school counselling staff. This allocation is reviewed annually.

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QUESTION

47. What is the DET plan to maintain and increase counsellor skills to meet the needs within schools? (the average counsellor is female in her mid 50s suggesting an ageing and gender imbalance that could result in a large shortage in a relatively short period)

ANSWER

The Department of Education and Training has introduced a number of strategies to increase the pool of school counsellors. These have included sponsorship to complete psychology qualifications, retraining teachers, retraining in psychology and employing qualified personnel to gain teaching experience.

The Department continues to look at ways in which the professional supervision and career paths of members of the school counselling service can be enhanced.

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QUESTION

48. What plans does DET have to provide more counselling rather than testing services?

ANSWER

The school counsellors' work plan has the focus areas of intensive and targeted support to students with identified learning and mental health concerns as well as universal support to all students through the utilisation of student welfare and wellbeing programs. These priorities are determined by the principal and the local school counsellor through the work plan based on local requirements.

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QUESTION

49. Of the 254 teachers recruited into special education positions in 2009 how many were qualified (i.e. post graduate in special education not just generalist teaching?)

ANSWER

The number of teachers recruited in special education positions in 2009 was 264 as referenced on page 77 of the department's submission to the inquiry. Of these:

- 75 teachers have qualifications in special education registered on the department's personnel system gained as part of their initial teacher education program or through postgraduate courses.
- 69 teachers are currently completing post graduate qualifications in special education or have taught in the special education teaching area for at least two years of the previous five years and have done so with an acceptable level of success (as confirmed by their principal) and have this status recorded on the department's personnel system.
- 120 teachers do not have qualifications recorded on the department's personal system. Some of these teachers may have qualifications that are not recorded. While teachers who gain additional qualifications are asked to notify the department so their personnel records can be updated it is not mandatory to do so. Teachers are reminded to notify the department of any additional qualifications they may have gained on a fairly regular basis. This group of teachers will also be advised of the opportunity to participate in future special education retraining programs.

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QUESTION

50. What pre-service training does a support-learning officer receive?
- Have all support-learning officers received this training?
 - If no, why not?

ANSWER

The school learning support officer position is an administrative and support staff position in schools and applicants applying for these positions do not need specific prerequisite qualifications. An applicant for a school learning support officer position must be able to demonstrate the relevant skills, expertise, or experience in addressing the selection criteria for the position.

School learning support officers can access the Certificate III TAFE course titled *Education Support – School Learning Support Officer* which is offered by TAFE institutes. A variety of funding sources are available for school learning support officers to access this training: full fee payment, government subsidised or external (Commonwealth) traineeship funds.

The department is looking at ways that the online professional learning courses currently being delivered through the school learning support coordinator initiative can be expanded to include school learning support officers. Trials of the online course included some school learning support officers and demonstrated that the course was relevant to this role. The department is working with regions to find the best ways to expand access to the courses.

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QUESTION

51. What evidence does DET have to show that the mandatory pre-service training (16 weeks at a maximum of 2 hours per week) provides the knowledge and skills required to meet the diverse learning needs of all students?

ANSWER

Evidence of effective teaching and learning to meet the needs of all students is provided at the mandatory level of accreditation at Professional Competence. All beginning new scheme teachers must meet this level. It requires consistent demonstration of all the Institute of Teachers' Professional Teaching Standards, including those targeting students with special needs. Evidence of competence is described in an Accreditation Report. The Report outlines the evidence used to make the accreditation decision. The teacher attaches documentary evidence to the Report to support the accreditation decision. To date the department has accredited over 4000 beginning new scheme teachers at Professional Competence.

All Accreditation Reports are audited by the NSW Institute of Teachers and advice is provided to the department about their quality.

Teachers must then maintain their accreditation at Professional Competence. This includes participation in professional development endorsed by the Institute as addressing the Professional Teaching Standards.

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QUESTION

52. There appears to be a higher incidence of OH&S incidents in special schools. What is the plan to prevent future incidents?

ANSWER

The Department of Education and Training encourages all schools to actively report incidents, whether they result in injury or illness. The Department provides a hotline for staff to report incidents.

The Department provides a range of health and safety programs and resources to support schools in managing health and safety at the workplace.

Special schools have access to the Department's online safety management system which includes a range of appropriate risk management tools to support health and safety in special education settings. One such tool is the Student Behaviour Management Intervention (SBMI) process, which provides an opportunity to assess student behaviour and implement strategic support for the student. School also have access to a range of regional support services, including specialised health and safety and disability support staff.

The Department continues to deliver programs to further strengthen health and safety management. As part of the department's *Safe Working and Learning Strategy 2009-2012*, the department is committed to developing a number of early intervention and prevention strategies, including a program focusing on schools for special purposes. Development of this program will commence in 2010.

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QUESTION

53. It was stated in public hearings: "So when you come to questions of funding you have to properly consider the whole of the budget that is available, and the whole of the budget that is available, thankfully in recent years has been rising. I would like it to rise more and faster. The director general of health would like the same thing. The director general of human services would like the same thing. Unfortunately, there are complex and difficult competing priorities that have to be worked out by governments and Parliaments."

The Teachers Federation claim, based on an independent analysis of budget figures, the NSW public schools have had a declining share of combined state and federal government funding and therefore private schools have had an increasing share over the same time.

What steps are being taken to address this issue considering the evidence of the rising incidence of students with high support needs and increasing costs to educate them?

ANSWER

The student profile, including special education students, is taken into account when the Department requests funding from Treasury annually as part of the budget process. Budgets are framed in view of priorities and available funds.

The issue of funding allocation between the public and private school sectors has been the subject of regular ongoing debate with the Federal Government. The NSW Department of Education and Training takes a proactive role in engaging in this debate to obtain the best result for NSW students.

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QUESTION

54. What role should the Director General of DET have in lobbying on behalf of the public education system to Government for an increased share of funding?

ANSWER

The Director-General is a public servant not a lobbyist. He is responsible for advising Government on education policy and the resources required to implement the policies the Government decides to pursue.

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QUESTION

55. An example provided by the Secondary Principals' Council's submission stated:

"On the North Coast, there are very few services or alternate placements schools can access. The Coffs Harbour Learning Centre for 21 students is always full. Mental health issues are ignored unless suicide or threats are involved. Schools are expected to deal with all disorders supported en passant and with meagre funding support and resources. The truth is that we do not fully provide for the needs of our students. Suspension is our method of protecting the rest from the most acting out behaviours. Direct therapy and intervention do not happen – the itinerant behaviour model is not working in secondary schools."

and another example from the Primary Principals' Association stated:

"Growing need for autism and behaviour disorders classes. Current school has 1 Behaviour Disordered (BD) class and only 1 space available in 2010. 8 applications received. These students then go into mainstream and minimal funding (1 hour a day) means schools are dealing with welfare and not curriculum for all students."

On page 28 of the submission:

"Specialist programs are specifically designed to support students who have behaviour and learning difficulties and provide intensive support for these students while ensuring regular classrooms are not disrupted."

Does the department reject or accept the examples provided by the Secondary Principals' Council and the Primary Principals' Association to be true?

ANSWER

The Department provides an extensive network of services to support to students and their teachers in NSW Government schools. This network includes class teachers, executive staff, the school's learning support team, home school liaison

officers, support teachers learning assistance, support teachers behaviour, support teachers integration, out of home care teachers and a range of other regional positions who work with the school to ensure that students have the support they need in order to learn effectively. Individual examples need to be considered within the context of the full range of services and provisions available to schools.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE

QUESTION

56. Can the Department of Education and Training explain more fully the role of the school learning support team?

ANSWER

The learning support team is a whole-school planning and support mechanism. It is formed with the purpose of addressing the learning needs of specific students through the coordination, development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of educational programs.

An effective learning support team facilitates and enhances:

- recognition by a school that whole school management strategies support inclusive practices within the school
- the prioritising and allocation of resources to best cater for the needs of students with additional learning needs.
- a greater understanding, awareness and responsiveness to the learning needs of every student but particularly those with additional learning needs
- the capacity for coordination, collaboration, sharing of expertise and collegial support between the learning support team and other members of the school and wider school community when planning for students with additional learning needs.
- collaboration and sharing of expertise between members of the school and wider school community in meeting the needs of students with additional learning needs
- awareness raising of staff and responsiveness to the learning needs of students
- identification and effective coordination of targeted teacher professional learning, where appropriate, across the whole school
- effective coordination of support services from within and outside the school.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE

QUESTION

57. Can the Department of Education and Training Outline the proposed *School Learning Support Program*, including an explanation of how schools would be allocated resources under this proposed model?

ANSWER

The proposed School Learning Support Program is intended to provide more immediate support for classroom teachers, significantly reduce administration for schools, increase the expertise of specialist teachers and improve the coordination of support for students with additional learning needs and their class teachers.

Key features of the program are:

More immediate support for classroom teachers

Currently a number of specialist programs operate through a referral process and class teachers in need of assistance can wait for weeks to get the help they need. The *School Learning Support Program* aims to make assistance for students and their class teachers more immediately available by allocating resources directly to each school.

Reduced administration

Currently schools are required to complete referrals, disability confirmation and applications for funding for students to receive additional support. The *School Learning Support Program* aims to reduce the paperwork required for many students to get the help they need.

Increased expertise of specialist teachers

The *School Learning Support Program* aims to support specialist teachers by providing extensive and ongoing professional development.

Coordinated effort

Currently class teachers can require the expertise of multiple specialist teachers due to the single focus of their current roles. For example, a student with a learning

difficulty and behaviour disorder would often require the class teacher to be working with more than one specialist teacher.

The *School Learning Support Program* aims to broaden the expertise of specialist teachers to better equip them to provide more effective and coordinated support for teachers in their classrooms. It will also provide more flexibility for principals to make decisions about how to use specialist teachers to meet the particular needs of students in their school.

A working party comprised of key stakeholder groups is further developing the proposed new model and will consider the resource allocation formula during term 2 and 3, 2010 in the context of the active trial. The resources allocated to schools are school learning support teacher positions and funding. The trial in Illawarra and South East Region will also inform the recommendations of the working party.

Current Formula - Positions

The proposed model will allocate 1,910 School Learning Support Teacher positions directly to primary, secondary and central schools across the state for a three year period. The program will be funded by merging some existing programs and allocating these positions directly to schools.

Every primary, secondary and central school will receive a base allocation and will have a School Learning Support Teacher. Schools with an enrolment of up to 159 students will receive a base allocation of 0.1 full time equivalent (FTE). Schools with enrolments of 160 or more will receive a base allocation of 0.4 FTE. Many schools will also attract an additional allocation based upon the Student Learning Need Index. Both allocations will be added together to form each school's notional School Learning Support Teacher allocation. This base allocation was used in the School Learning Support Coordinator initiative (2009).

A Student Learning Need Index is calculated using the results for each school on state-wide test data over a three year period. This method is currently used in the allocation of positions and funds in the Learning Assistance Program. The index is calculated using the following process:

- The total number of students in all schools who perform in the bottom 10% in reading and/or numeracy for each grade and year of test is counted. Students who perform in the lowest 10% in both tests are counted twice.
- The number of positions available is then divided by the total number of students performing in the lowest 10%. This then provides the index.
- The allocation to an individual school is then calculated by multiplying the number of students in the lowest 10% in that school by the index.

A primary and secondary index is calculated separately.

Current Formula - Funding

\$34.3 million funding will be allocated to schools that does not require paperwork or a disability confirmation for many students to get the help they need.

There are three components of funding for students with lower level support needs.

Component 1: Learning Assistance Program

\$7.6 million dollars will be allocated using the student learning need index. This is the same method used in the past to allocate Learning Assistance Program funding. The amount of funding is also the same.

Component 2: Mental Health Disorders

\$14.7 million dollars will be allocated from the *Integration, Funding Support* program using the student learning need index. This is the total amount currently provided to students with mental health disorders who receive less than \$6,000.

Component 3: Autism

\$12 million dollars will be allocated from the *Integration, Funding Support* program using prevalence data. This is the total amount currently provided to students with autism who receive less than \$6,000.

Each school will receive the sum of these funding components as a total notional allocation to support students with additional learning needs.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE

QUESTION

58. Regarding the 110 hours of online training: What is it comprised of? Who is/will be receiving this training? Has this training been evaluated? If so, what were the results of any evaluation?

ANSWER

168 School Learning Support Coordinators working in 265 Government schools across the state are currently being provided with 110 hours of online training to support their role. A wide range of other education personnel are also accessing the online training through the Department's regions. Currently, there are over 2,250 course registrations including classroom teachers, specialist teachers, executive and school learning support officers from across the state. Access to the courses is determined by regions according to local priorities.

The 110 hours of online training is comprised of a suite of courses that are delivered by a trained tutor to learning cohorts of 10 to 12 participants. Participants attend three sessions with their tutor, work through the online course materials and activities at their own pace over 8 to 10 weeks, complete tasks within the course and contribute to online discussion forums. After completion, participants are able to continue to access and use the course materials in their practice.

Courses being delivered include understanding autism, managing behaviour, language and communication, motor coordination and curriculum access. The courses are designed to support participant's understanding of areas of special education need and their practice in assessing, planning and implementing strategies to support students learning. The courses provide participants with access to information about a wide range of strategies for supporting students and are informed by the research literature and practice experience in schools.

The courses are used widely in schools in the United Kingdom. The Department's decision to adapt the courses for use in NSW Government schools has been informed by a number of evaluative strategies including critical review of course content by education specialists and allied health professionals, testing of each courses with small groups of education personnel with relevant backgrounds and experience, and a successful trial of the autism course in 2008 with over 200

personnel from across the state, including teachers, school learning support coordinators, specialist personnel and school executive. These strategies found that the courses are accessible for a wide range of participants with varying levels of training and experience, could provide consistent training across the state, and increase participants' knowledge, confidence and skills.

In-built feedback mechanisms in the courses provide a continuous source of quantitative and qualitative data about participants and the impact of the courses on their knowledge and practice at the time of completion. This data indicates that the courses rate highly with participants and are directly impacting on their practice. This is reflected in an average completion rate across all available courses of 98%. In addition, data collected 90 days after completing the course provides qualitative and quantitative data about participant practice. Available data collected 90 days after completion indicates that 97% of participants providing this data to date refer to and use the course materials three months after the completing the course.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE

QUESTION

59. What, if any, other professional development or professional learning does the Department of Education and Training offer for teachers, in addition to the online training mentioned above?

ANSWER

Teacher professional learning is the key intervention to improve student learning outcomes. There is a strong research base that professional learning and school improvement are so closely intertwined that their effects are almost impossible to disentangle.

The Department makes a significant contribution to strengthening the capacity and capability of all staff through professional learning programs. These programs provide teachers and school leaders with opportunities in professional learning to improve student learning outcomes.

In addition to the provision of the 110 hour online training for school learning support coordinators, the Department has provided teachers and school leaders with 314 NSW Institute of Teachers' registered courses and programs. These includes the state-wide delivery of 3 360 sessions of registered professional development and 40 sessions that specifically support students with special needs.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE

QUESTION

60. Page 33 of transcript: “You may need to take this on notice but it would be useful if you could give us the information, for example, on the breakdown of the number of students with disabilities and special needs in each category of schools of specific purposes, support classes in mainstream schools and those in mainstream classrooms.”

ANSWER

The following tables provide a breakdown of students by disability type in support classes in special and mainstream schools; and students in mainstream classes:

School for Specific Purposes	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Autism	58	60	77	91	128
Hearing	28	25	24	30	29
Intellectual	2845	2761	2734	2797	2942
Mental Health	552	549	659	721	762
Physical	25	23	22	26	18
Vision	3	3	3	3	3
total	3511	3421	3518	3668	3882

Support Classes in Mainstream Schools	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Autism	406	419	537	632	893
Hearing	236	216	203	254	243
Intellectual	11296	10960	10851	11104	11679
Mental Health	478	476	572	625	661
Physical	261	240	222	264	186
Vision	0	0	0	0	0
total	12677	12311	12386	12879	13662

Mainstream Classes - Integration, Funding Support Program	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Autism	3067	3621	4252	4913	5620
Hearing	453	461	473	445	403
Intellectual	1199	1173	1238	1214	880
Mental Health	4631	5083	5540	5867	6291
Physical	1472	1554	1585	1572	1574
Vision	276	268	248	253	238
total	11098	12160	13336	14264	15006

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QUESTION ON NOTICE

QUESTION

61. (page 35 of transcript)

- a. In terms of funding also, if you can take it on notice just to give us an understanding of where the money goes, Federally to State, down that way?
- b. You are asking for a breakdown of the entire \$1.1 billion into categories? Also, can you cut it in another direction as to what that money is actually spent on?

ANSWER

- a. As per response to Question 1, it is not possible to separate State and Commonwealth funding at the program level.
- b. A breakdown of the \$1.1 billion into special education funding category is outlined below:

SERVICE GROUP FUNDING	2009-10 Estimate \$000's
Integration Funding Support (additional to base funding)	123,992
Learning Assistance Program	149,357
Special Schools	179,766
Support Classes	603,488
School Student Special Transport Scheme (Govt.base)	49,733
TOTAL EXPENSES BASED ON SERVICE GROUPS	1,106,336

Integration funding reflects the additional funding component to students supported through this program above regular classroom teacher and school costs. Regular classroom teacher and school costs are reflected as part of general education costs for all students in regular schools. Students supported through the Integration program access both components.

Funding for students in special schools and support classes however, reflects their full support costs.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE

QUESTION

62. (page 41 from transcript) Can I ask you to take this question on notice and supply the Committee with a detailed description of what is being trialled in the Illawarra and south-east region?

ANSWER

See question 57.

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QUESTION ON NOTICE

QUESTION

63. (page 44 of transcript) An issue brought to our attention is that special teachers and general teachers throughout the system have a perception that the new proposals for funding structure will actually remove resources from their individual schools. Rather than a long answer, will you take on notice how you will tackle the issue in relation to communication with the school and teaching sector about that?"

ANSWER

The working party representing key stakeholder groups has made recommendations regarding comprehensive communication with principals, staff and parents in Illawarra and South East Region as part of the trial. This communication includes meetings of principals and staff, written information about the program and its resources, and support material for principals and school learning support teams.

The planned evaluation of the trial will consider the effectiveness of the program including the communication strategies used to support its implementation.

If the program is expanded statewide a communication strategy will be developed to explain the revised model and address any incorrect assumptions that exist about the program. The communication strategies identified as effective in the trial will also be used to support statewide implementation.

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