

Questions on Notice:  
Inquiry into the provision of education for students with a disability or special needs  
Questions from Dr John Kaye MLC

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Questions on notice to the NSW Schools for Specific Purposes (SSP) Principals Network

1. Please explain how SSPs are funded.

In Special Schools, the school is staffed (or funded) according to the number of approved classes. Each class has one teacher and one School Learning Support Officer (SLSO). The size of the class is determined by totalling each student's *Factor of Need* until it reaches 10 (approximately). The *Factor of Need* is a numerical value that corresponds to the label of the student's designated prime disability, and is allocated to the student by the Placement Panel when the family seeks enrolment in an SSP.

For example a student with a

- moderate intellectual disability has a factor of need of 1.111
- severe intellectual disability has a factor of need of 1.666
- physical disability has a factor of need of 1.225
- behaviour disorder, mental health disorder or autism have a factor of need of 1.428

The term *Factor of Need* is a misnomer in that it does not take into account the individual student's educational needs such as access to the curriculum, communication, mobility, social and behavioural development or personal care as is the case for students in mainstream classes receiving Funding Support. In SSPs classes are formed according to their label – not student need and assumes students present with a single or prime disability which disregards the individual differences and/or other co morbid disabilities of students within the class.

As stated in our submission, SSPs often have some of the most challenging and complex students in the community, many with multiple disabilities and this needs to be taken into account if students are to be able to maximise their learning outcomes. Despite recommendations of the *Comino Report* (late 1990's) and more recently the *NSW Auditor-General's Report: Educating Primary School Students with Disabilities* (2006) that recommended best practice approaches in determining the allocation of funding to children with a disability should be focused on a student's needs rather than their disability, SSPs continue to be funded by the prime disability label..

In addition, SSPs are staffed (funded) according to a Primary School model of one teacher for one class, with two hours per week non teaching time and no executive release to support students. The majority of SSPs have a significant secondary aged cohort. In mainstream High Schools, Support Classes are staffed at 1.4 teachers per class as well as Head Teachers receiving additional executive release. SSPs have the same obligations as High Schools for their secondary aged students but do not receive equal staffing.

All other funding as allocated by the DET for a school's Global Budget is the same as received by other Primary Schools.