

Submission
No 40

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

Name: Name Suppressed
Date received: 8/02/2010

Partially Confidential

I write to the enquiry as a new high school teacher appointed to an isolated rural school, and having undertaken pre-service training in central schools:

1. 1. The nature, level and adequacy of funding for the education of children with a disability

The funding I witness provided to students with special needs in central schools appears excessive. I question why a dedicated special needs teacher is not appointed to support students with special needs rather than a task force of teacher aides.

2. 2. Best practice approaches in determining the allocation of funding to children with a disability, particularly whether allocation should be focused on a student's functioning capacity rather than their disability

3. 3. The level and adequacy of current special education places within the education system

4. 4. The adequacy of integrated support services for children with a disability in mainstream settings, such as school classrooms

As a new teacher I am often not informed of the student's special needs. Furthermore when I do seek the information I am told the information is restricted for privacy reasons - and that I will need to learn it as I go.

I also believe in the classroom of less than 12 students, the needs of special needs student's impacts negatively on the learning opportunities of the other students. For instance with class sizes of 2 or 4, I find teaching special needs students more difficult than in teaching a class of 20.

5. 5. The provision of a suitable curriculum for intellectually disabled and conduct disordered students

The curriculum is there, but as a new teacher who is learning how to teach, how can I be expected to modify a curriculum if I am attempting to learn and apply the curriculum in the first place. Also how can I modify a curriculum for students I have no knowledge of their needs. I am certain with a few years experience in teaching than I would be more qualified to adapt a curriculum having at least taught to the curriculum before.

6. 6. Student and family access to professional support and services, such as speech therapy, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and school counsellors

7. 7. The provision of adequate teaching training, both in terms of pre-service and ongoing professional training

I completed my degree at _____ University. During my studies I was undertaking 7 university subjects a semester while working as a teacher fulltime in a town 125 kilometres away (travelling 3 hours per day as well as teaching 5 days per week). I am using this case, as an example of a student who was interested in achieving a pass average. As a student interested in pass averages, the quality of the education allow me to develop an understanding of educational philosophies and how to apply them however my education did not allow me to graduated as proficient teacher.

However I use this example as I was also a member of the Academic Senate of the university concurrently to work and study commitments; and I recognise that the University was working to achieve competencies needed by undergraduate teachers and by all qualitative studies, the university would be meeting academic standards of education.

This leaves me in a unique position to have the opinion that the training of teachers at university will never develop

proficient teachers upon graduation. Thus the focus and expectation of teachers within the industry to have proficient teachers upon graduation is misguided. Furthermore, there is no doubt the expectation of proficient teachers upon graduation is most likely the reason (based on experience with peers) that 20% of graduates quit teaching within 2 years of completing their degree.

Therefore it is in my opinion that pre-service training should not be the training required to address the issues of delivery of teaching students with special needs. Overall I suggest that the commission look at providing post entry training to assist improve the standards of teachers delivering special needs education. In plain English, I would learn more after a couple of years on the job, that I would had I learnt about during a pre-service course.

8. 8. Any other related matters.

Why as a teacher, do I enter a class where special needs students (or any student for that matter):

- a) a) Have epileptic fits, due to epilepsy. And I have no prior warning that this regularly happens.
- b) b) Find out midyear that a year 12 male special needs student has violent tendencies.
- c) c) Have to clean faeces and urine off the floor because a year 12 female special needs student has no bathroom skills.
- d) d) Have to protect high school females and primary school students in central schools from year 10 male special needs students who are beginning to have sexual urges.

These events are demoralising for all involved, place the teacher at risk, other students at risk and do not produce an environment which helps provide an education. There needs to be some form of segregation between students with special needs and mainstream students for the benefit of the special needs student in Central schools. I personally feel,

today as a new teacher that I cannot provide special needs students a satisfactory education which will help them. Indeed I quit working at one small public central school and moved to another larger private school because the support was not offered in the small school and the needs of some students were too much for a new teacher handle.