

Submission
No 46

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

Name: Name Suppressed
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Partially Confidential

Submission for the Inquiry into Special Education 2010

As a full time employee of the Department of Education over the past 30 years I have been teaching students with special needs and learning difficulties in mainstream and special education classes within regular schools.

[omitted at the request of the author]

With this as my background and my life long commitment to education I submit the following ideas to your committee.

Early Intervention is the foundation stone to success. It is more efficient and effective . Without intervention students can acquire bad habits, disengage, incorrectly learn strategies and knowledge etc. To reteach a skill requires intensive instruction and access to many opportunities for practice and application and generalisation.

Provision of appropriate academic programs prevents anxiety and associated behaviour problems. Funding must be in place for academic intervention rather than for behaviour intervention through schools, DOCS, juvenile justice or the criminal system.

All teachers need access to high levels of training and support. Two outstanding speakers are Tony Attwood and Sue Larkey. Both address the needs of students on the Autism Spectrum. Both address their needs as well as those of families and schools.

Specials teachers are required beyond the level of classroom teachers to provide specific intensive programs. Specialist personnel have an in-depth knowledge of the skills and also the techniques to re-engage the student. This needs to be delivered through daily instruction. Without daily instruction and practice opportunities students become confused and the special program is ineffective.

Mainstream classes are dynamic learning environments with many changes in routine and personnel throughout the day/week/ term/ year. This is not an appropriate environment

for all students. Most students with special needs require structured repetitive classrooms where they can achieve success through small sequential steps.

Students require appropriate intervention strategies that give them a fresh start. Students who have learning disabilities or special needs experience failure. This results in low self esteem and lack of resiliency. A fresh start gives them an opportunity to grow and build their self confidence and develop a positive attitude to learning. This fresh start might be within their school or at another setting.

There are many advantages of establishing special groups or classes. Parents are more committed to the specialist program rather than the everyday program. Students are in a group of peers with the same problems - a problem share is a problem solved. Their engagement levels rise rapidly. Students lose their fear of failure. They are not embarrassed by their inability and have an opportunity to shine. I find the students are initially hesitant to tell news, answer questions or read out loud but within days they are vocal members of the group.

Many people fear that withdrawal programs alienate the student. From my experience these programs are most effective. The short time away from their peers in a specialist setting is an investment in a life. I have seen students and families change because of this intervention. I have seen families unit when students can finally talk clearly to grandmothers. We are breaking down barriers to further education and employment. I have seen a student go on to become school captains and another be placed in the top English group at high school.

Special Education classes, Support Teachers, and Specialist programs are valuable assets in our education system. It is essential that we maintain these specialist personelle and grow this network of expertise.

Thankyou for this opportunity.

Yours sincerely