

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

Name: Name Suppressed
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Partially Confidential

I work as a support teacher in an IM (intellectually mild) class in a High school in the . The current system looks at primary classifications of deficit in students and places students in support places according to this classification. A number of students in my class have multiple disabilities including physical and mental health disabilities but because their primary classification has been put down as IM they are able to be placed in my class.

An IM class can have a maximum of 18 students (consideration should be given by the placement panel if numbers exceed 15, in our district this does not appear to take place). I previously worked in a special school for students with behavior and emotional disorders. Due to the primary classification of BD (behavior disorder) and ED (emotional disturbance) the school could cater for 21 students with a full time staff of 7. I now find myself with up to 18 students, some of whom I used to teach at the behavior school by myself with one SLSO who is present in the class approximately 30% of the time. The reason I have my old behavior students is that they had their primary disability changed from BD to IM to give them somewhere to go after their allocated time period was up at the behavior school. The students do not change, the classifications do, this is particularly difficult when students present with multiple problems and you are grossly understaffed.

I do not feel we should be looking at more funding, we should look at moving away from the deficit model of funding. All students regardless of ability or disability should be educated in mainstream schools with mainstream teachers and support should come from specialist staff to help both students and teachers. The students I teach are great kids and are "normal" - The school system chooses to treat them as abnormal and does not accept that the system needs to change and not the students. By excluding kids from school life in special schools and support units we are not supporting them but marginalizing and giving them a learned helplessness that can dog some for the rest of their lives.

Its my belief that schools should be given an Inclusion fund to support students with disabilities and this money be spent on SLSO's, consultant special ed teachers and adaption technology. This Inclusion fund should be based on whole school numbers regardless of disability criteria, don't look for disability, concentrate on what students can do and fix problems.