

**INQUIRY INTO STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY OR
SPECIAL NEEDS IN NEW SOUTH WALES SCHOOLS**

Name: Name suppressed (PC)

Date received: 28 January 2017

Partially
Confidential

To the Hon. Committee Members,

Firstly thank you for your inquiry into such an important issue that faces many families and each and every school.

Sadly my son didn't cope in the public school system and while he was identified with complex learning, emotional and social needs, together with his Aboriginal status, he was failed.

When I began teaching in 1996 I remember vividly that funding was generous. This was when we were told that when students were being 'fully integrated' they would receive lots of funding and assistance as they were not taking up very expensive places at SSP Schools (Schools for Specific Purposes) and so they were SAVING the government money. They were then able to access teacher's aides very easily and often times my IM and my Down's Syndrome kids had full-time, one-to-one aides.

These days are LONG gone.

Now IM kids receive NO specialised funding. So in one generation, they have gone from "needing" a five day a week aide, to now "not needing" them at all. This is absurd. My Down's students once had four or five days a week aide support, and now we get none.

This causes immense pressure on the classroom teacher as well as the rest of the students in the class. The teacher, in most cases, has no other choice but to sit with these high needs kids to provide support (rightly so) however the other students receive little support for themselves, often they need to make do with other kids who provide peer-tutoring as the teacher physically can't do it all.

Going to my son, we had no choice but to withdraw him. We are unable to afford any form of private schooling (including the specialised ASPECT Autistic schools) and so we homeschool him. We wanted to "part-time" homeschool him however that is not allowed in NSW. We would have loved to have him at school three days a week and then as he loses ability to cope with the stresses of school, homeschool him on the other days. To me this would be a wonderful compromise but at present it is not allowed.

My concerns at present is that as a teacher I am unable to do my job as I was once able to. My classes now have on average five special needs students. Usually two have Autism Spectrum Disorder and three other students have a range of needs including intellectual disabilities, physical disabilities and also mental health needs. A class with five vulnerable students and twenty-five regular students, and having no support is just so hard. I may be fortunate enough to have an SLSO (new term for teacher's aide) a few hours a week, but to be honest, sometimes this is just a waste of time as the vulnerable kids find this haphazard approach difficult to manage.

I could go on, but I won't.

My points are clear. We are overwhelmed with the current "full-integration" model. I can't see the government providing more money to schools. For me the solution needs to be multi-faceted.

- 1) Acknowledge that SSP schools have a place for many students.
- 2) Acknowledge that "full-integration" doesn't work each and every time.

3) Provide funding to these kids at 1996 levels. I would love to see a comparison chart to see the REAL TERM loss of money that was once promised.

Thank you all for your time and thank you for your confidentiality. I love my job and I love helping the students of NSW. I certainly am wanting to help to find the best solution for our students and I am excited that we can improve the present lot for our kids with disabilities.