

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

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential



As public school teachers and NSW Teachers Federation members we continue to campaign for the right of every student to receive a public education of the highest quality and for all students to become successful learners.

We are committed to equity and excellence for every student and in doing so assert, as was confirmed in The Review of Funding for Schooling (Gonski Review) that it costs more to deliver on these values for students with disability.

We will not stand by the currently inadequate provision of education to students with disability and the lifelong implications this inequity has.

The National Education Reform Agreement (NERA) and Australian Education Act 2013, acknowledge the requirement for, and commitment to additional funds for students with disability. The NSW government's unwavering commitment to the Gonski funding model paves the way for this investment to be realised.

We stand ready to work with our employer and NSW government in delivering equitable quality education but can only do so effectively when equipped with the necessary tools and supported by a system that is responsive to need.

We offer the following submission as an index of unmet need and a call for equity for every student.

A) Equitable access to resources for students with a disability or special needs in regional and metropolitan areas.

Large class sizes, limited funds for faculties and school programs and the growing numbers of students with disabilities and their complex needs have all affected the confidence and ability of teachers to adequately support these students in a mainstream classroom in teaching and learning and assessment activities. It is common for teachers to feel overwhelmed by their class diversity and meeting the individual needs of each student with the appropriate curriculum and level of support. Our school currently receives in school specialist support of 0.7 LaST for three years i.e. 2015-2017. This allocation can remain the same or increase/decrease for the next 3 years -2018-2020. Not having a full time allocation limits the access of teachers/parents/students to LaST support and the ability of the LaST to implement effective programs and intervention strategies. Having the LaST allocation linked to NAPLAN results is problematic because it is based upon the outcomes of past Year 7 and 9 cohorts rather than the needs of the future Year 7 and 9 student cohorts. In terms of Integration Funding, this support only comes if a student has a specific diagnosed disability ie physical, moderate intellectual disability or oppositional defiant disorder/conduct disorder. We currently have 6 students with this funding which is used to employ an SLSO as Integration funding is tied to aide or teacher time. This funding is critical to support these students given their challenging learning and behavioural needs. Unfortunately, given the complex needs of these students, Integration funding is rarely enough and usually requires prioritising specific programs and KLA support. Support placements are often difficult to process as Access Request submissions are extremely time consuming and staff are occasionally required to adjust/add more information. It is common that there are limited or no available places for students to access. Due to various impairments, specialist equipment and Environmental adjustments are often needed within the school. While all staff do their best to accommodate these changes, it has been a lack of rooms in certain blocks that has impeded the best solution. The school had a lift outfitted in one block but despite the recommendations of several Executive staff, the structure was placed in an area with

minimal rooms, effectively negating its effectiveness. Support can be helpful for those students who require support and intervention from relevant personnel in the Educational Services team, however, it usually requires additional paperwork before it can be accessed. The professional judgement of teachers is not always acknowledged and this often impacts on the ability to access additional intervention. Each student with a disability is unique and requires an individualised support, learning and transition plan. The planning and implementation process takes considerable time and involves ongoing consultation with all stakeholders. Some students require a significant amount of intervention due to their complex needs and this decreases the resources that are available for all students with disabilities. At times, students/resources need to be prioritised which can leave some KLA/teachers unable to access support they request. e.g. individual travel training instruction, one on one support to manage specialist equipment, significant transition support etc.

B) The impact of the Government's 'Every Student Every School' policy on the provision of education to students with a disability or special needs in New South Wales public schools.

Professional Learning for skilled and knowledgeable teachers is pivotal to the effective implementation of any of these programs. It is often the case though, especially at a large school, that funding and awareness of PL courses is not always available. Despite the implementation of ESES it isn't possible to have 'immediate' access to additional support for students with disability in regular classrooms as our school only receives 0.7 LaST allocation. This would require more funding and a full time LaST allocation. The role of the LaST is very broad and since the NDDS, it has become more administrative, leaving less time to provide direct and timely specialist assistance. Last year the HSIE staff networked with a Special school for a 3 hour Professional Learning session. Our SLSOs were invited to visit their school and were able to incorporate some ideas into supporting some of our students with disability in mainstream. Our school does not use the PLASST tool as we developed a more accessible function within SENTRAL. PLASST is not compulsory and there are other tools that we use/need to complete - NDDS, SENTRAL plans and IEPs. These all take a huge amount of time to complete and keep updated. RAM funding as part of the Gonski Model has taken some steps to enabling our school to allocate additional SLSOs (Teacher Aides) in class to support teachers and students with disability in the classroom. More aide time has helped to improve student outcomes by increasing student participation and engagement in learning, however there is always a need for more individual assistance.

C) Developments since the 2010 inquiry by General Purpose Standing Committee No. 2 into the provision of education to students with a disability or special needs and the implementation of its recommendations.

In response to the implementation of the recommendations of General Purpose Standing Committee No. 2, the following recommendations have not, or are not, being met in our school:

Recommendation 1: That the NSW Government substantially increase funding for students with disabilities and special needs in NSW Government schools to ensure all students have equitable access to education. Recommendation 8: That the Department of Education and Training: • acknowledge and accept that there is widespread concern about the unmet demand for special education places in NSW Government schools • undertake an immediate investigation into the level of unmet demand for special education places and classes and publish the results of this investigation • increase the number of special education places and classes to ensure that there are adequate places to cover demand for all students with disabilities and special needs abandon plans to dissolve existing language support classes Recommendation 25: That the Department of Education and Training provide additional resources, including relief time for teachers to develop Individual Education Plans.

for parents and carers.

Building relationships with parents/carers is critical in being able to provide the best possible support for students with disability, but it takes a considerable amount of teacher time. Unfortunately, teachers/key stakeholders at school have very limited 'spare' time where they can meet/communicate with parents. Often contact/meetings have to be organised before or after school hours or need to be planned into the future to ensure all can be present. Unfortunately, we have had to hold meetings without all of the key personnel present. It is mandatory to complete an IEP every year for each student with a disability. Depending on the student's progress, this plan may need to be updated/adjusted throughout the year and this involves additional meetings/consultation with stakeholders.

E) Any other related matters.