

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

**Organisation:** Northlakes High School (PC)

**Date received:** 25 February 2017

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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.**

Northlakes High School In School specialist staff - counsellors - Do students receive adequate and timely access to this support? YES, TO TIMELY, BUT NOT REALLY TO ADEQUATE. DUE TO TIME RESTRICTIONS AND IN PARTICULAR THE FACT THAT WE HAVE GONE FROM 6.25 DAYS TO 5 DAYS COUNSELLOR ALLOCATION AND THAT OUR KIDS HAVE BIG PROBLEMS, I OFTEN FEEL THAT WE ARE A TRIAGE SERVICE AND THAT WE REFER THEM OUT FOR MORE SPECIALISED HELP. - Do teachers know how to access this support? YES I FEEL THAT NLHS HAS A VERY GOOD REFERRAL PROCESS FOR WELFARE/COUNSELLOR SUPPORT - Do teachers find this support effective? DONT KNOW, YOU WOULD NEED TO ASK TEACHERS THAT - Is the professional judgement of teachers acknowledged and respected when accessing this support? YES MOST DEFINITELY, THE TEACHERS ARE THE ONES WITH THE KIDS AT THE COAL FACE EVERY DAY, I HAVE FOUND THAT MOST EXPERIENCED TEACHERS KNOW WHEN A CHILD HAS PROBLEMS AND NEEDS HELP, WHETHER THAT IS ACADEMIC, LEARNING OR SOCIAL OR EMOTIONAL - What inhibits and enables access to this support? OPPS THE FOLLOWING SHOULD BE IN BOLD - Time restricts the level of support and intervention we can provide. We are very lucky here at NLHS to have a range of Welfare supports in place for the kids, which in turn allows them to provide the support they need from the person they are most comfortable with. AND have a sequential referral process in place, means that the smaller easier problems can be solved along the way, provider quicker solutions and more support from the people the kids already know and have contact with. We are also very lucky to have welfare teachers who have been here a long time and know the background of families and the support systems and services that are out in the community. Integration Funding support - Do students receive adequate and timely access to this support? THE LUCKY ONES DO, I PERSONALLY DO NOT BELIEVE WE HAVE ENOUGH FUNDING IN SCHOOLS FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS - Do teachers/the school know how to access this support? YES - Do teachers/the school find this support effective and is it received at levels adequate to deliver equitable access to education and improved learning

outcomes. NOT SURE WHAT TEACHERS AND THE SCHOOL THINK. I PERSONALLY DO NOT THINK INTEGRATION FUNDING SUPPORT LEVELS ARE ADEQUATE TO EFFECTIVELY MADE ACCESS THE CURRICUUM AND EDUCATION EQUITABLE, NOR DO I BELIEVE THE FUNDING IS ADEQUATE TO IMPROVE LEARNING OUTCOMES MOST OF THE TIME. I THINK THAT MORE FUNDING NEEDS TO BE PROVIDED IN KINDY AND YEARS 1 TO PICK UP THE CHILDREN WHO ARE STRUGGLING, FIND OUT WHY AND PROVIDE EFFECTIVE INTERVENTION FOR EVERY SINGLE STUDENT THAT NEEDS IT. - Is the professional judgement of teachers and that of others directly involved with the student, acknowledged and respected when accessing this support? I'M NOT SURE ABOUT THIS. AT MY PRIMARY SCHOOL, LST ALLOCATES WHAT THE IFS IS USED FOR AND WHERE POSSIBLE STUDENTS ARE BUNDLED TOGETHER SO THAT OTHER STUDENTS WITH SIMILAR NEEDS CAN PIGGYBACK ONTO THE FUNDED STUDENT (HOPE THAT MAKES SENSE) BUT NOT ALWAYS SURE THAT THE FUNDING IS DISTRIBUTED WHERE THE TEACHERS FEEL IT IS BEST ALLOCATED. - What inhibits and enables access to this support? THE AMOUNT OF FUNDING THE STUDENT RECEIVES, IS NOT ENOUGH.

**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.**

Support placement - Do students receive adequate and timely access to this support? THE LUCKY ONES WHO ARE SUCCESSFUL DO BUT THERE ARE MANY STUDENTS WHO SHOULD HAVE A SUPPORT PLACEMENT BUT NOT ENOUGH PLACES AVAILABLE - Do teachers/the school know how to access this support? ARE they familiar with and supported through the Access Request process? BASED ON MY EXPERIENCE THEY KNOW HOW TO ACCESS THE SUPPORT BUT I DONT FEEL THEY ARE FAMILIAR WITH AND SUPPORTED THROUGH THEIR PART OF FILLING OUT THE ACCESS REQUEST. - Is teachers professional judgement acknowledged and respected when accessing support placement? YES I THINK SO - Has school been asked to resubmit AR etc.?

- When students have not been deemed eligible or suitable for a support placement, has the school been provided with a rationale for decision and alternative support?

have students been deemed suitable and eligible for support placement and not been offered a placement? - Does your school have support unit etc? YES - What inhibits and enables access to this support? FUNDS AND PLACES IN SUPPORT CLASSES

**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.**

Northlakes High School currently has 3.2 LAST teachers to support the learning needs of the 457 NCCD identified students out of a school of just over 900 students, that need adjustments and accommodations. In addition to the students need the LAST teachers are also required to assess new students, support teacher's pedagogy and the up skilling of staff on current NCCD support needs. Although staff have had continual TPL on issues like: referral processes, Interventions and reporting for NCCD we find our staff are overwhelmed and still do not have enough time for such a heavy workload. Specialist programs that have shown to be worthwhile with literacy and numeracy improvements for students are often costly and therefore, not covered in the RAM. Specialist support (ISTV, ISTH, ISTT, APLAS, ISTB) are slowly being diminished adding to the workload for our LAST teachers as they cannot access specialist help as it is highly limited in comparison to the need. The regional support services are often not staffed consistently and have a high staff turnover which leads to gaps in knowledge when supporting students in need. Current school counselling services are so short staffed and time poor (long suspensions, file reviews, AR) that we are currently accessing external agencies to support students and cover the shortfall. In addition to the LAST

allocations we currently have 10 current students on funding support and an onsite support unit that caters for 6 classes (2 ED classes, 1 Multicat, 1 IO class, 1 IM class and a senior IM class). The need for support at Northlakes High School is so great that the school has had to internally fund a mainstream behaviour class and 3 learning support classes due to poor literacy and numeracy levels and significant learning difficulties as well as social and behavioural issues. Time restraints around AR's are unrealistic and do not properly support the student's needs while in limbo (current RSSSP funding is minimal and restricted to LMG decision making). Furthermore, they do not provide an alternative support to meet the student needs. Even specialised equipment and environmental adjustments has huge time restraints and paper trails. \*The paper work and policies demands to make sure that the department is covered on top of a normal teaching load take time away from being able to properly support students, with effective interventions to support disabilities/special needs.

#### **D) Complaint and review mechanisms within the school systems in New South Wales for parents and carers.**

Complaint and review mechanisms within the school systems in New South Wales for parents and carers

1. Does your school have the capacity and resources to adequately and in a timely fashion establish meaningful relationships with parents/carers of students with disability? All parents and students with disabilities are regularly involved in meetings and other support structures within the school. Parents are invited into the school and are integral to decisions made about students. Records are kept both electronically and in hard copy of all contact with parents and decisions made. School counsellor and other agency supports may regularly be involved in supporting parents and carers.
2. Does your school have the capacity and resources to adequately and in a timely fashion work with and consult with parents/carers of students with disability? Northlakes High School incorporates a very successful Support Unit, specialised classes including ARC, ETC and CAPP, a Stage 5 learning difficulties class and two Stage 4 learning difficulties classes. All students with diagnosed difficulties, and many others, are registered on NCCD, with adjustments to learning noted as a mandatory requirement in all registration and recorded on SENTRAL.
3. Does your school have the capacity and resources to adequately and in a timely fashion respond to concerns and complaints raised by parents/carers of students with disability? Concerns or complaints are managed within the school with a complete regard to the welfare of students. A wide range of staff is equipped with the skills and knowledge to manage situations which arise. All staff are aware of the Department of Education complaints procedures and its requirements. The value of immediate and adequate response to concerns raised by parents is re-enforced in staff meetings and professional development.

#### **E) Any other related matters.**

At Northlakes High School our main issue is a lack of purpose built infrastructure to cater for the special needs of our support unit we currently have 2 demountable classrooms 1 of them has been condemned with rust holes in the floor. We have a dilapidated outdoor demountable toilet block that is in dire need of a replacement and completely inadequate to cater for the needs of our students. We do have fantastic and dedicated staff and a supportive community, that unfortunately feels that because we are a Low Socio-economic community we are not considered equitably for funding of critically needed purpose built infrastructure that can properly cater to the needs of our students.

**Organisation** Northlakes High School

This email was sent from the NSW Teachers Federation website.