

Submission
No 384

**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.

As a Learning and Support teacher (LaST) in the metropolitan area I feel isolated as I am the only LaST in my school and I am only on a 0.7 permanent load. I find it difficult to access resources / professional learning to support my students as I am not responsible for the budget/funding allocated to this area in my school and many times I am unable to present an argument to my executive for resources that they will approve. It has become a too difficult and I have given up trying. In many instances I will purchase resources and pay for them myself to assist my students. With regards to professional learning as a resource to support students with a disability, again I feel limited as all professional learning needs to be linked to my Performance and Development Plan (PDP). If my goals do not relate to the need of a particular student or the schools plan I will not be able to access resources. On another note- The consequences of this lack of resources in government schools is reflected in the number of applications made for Disability Provisions for the HSC. In 2015 Government schools made 8.0% of the applications whereas Independent schools represented 13.2% of the applications. It is not unreasonable to expect that if government schools are better resourced with more secondary LaS Teachers then the application rate would be higher. As it is the data suggests thousands of students in our government schools are not applying for Disability Provisions even though they may be eligible. The application process involves a lengthy process of gathering functional data from external professionals and internal school staff to submit to the NSW Education Standards Authority. There is pressure in my role to solely be responsible for this process however as a LaST on a 0.7 workload there is not adequate time allocated to conduct the necessary assessments required for learning difficulty applications. NESA in some instances requires a reading comprehension assessment as part of the application and recommend school use the York Assessment for Reading Comprehension. To conduct this assessment which I am responsible takes approximately 1 hour per student. In addition to collecting teacher feedback and other required evidence for the application. Lastly, Year 7 students who transition into high school without learning

to read require specific resources. For students to overcome gaps in acquiring literacy and/or skills require intensive programs that can be accessed several times a week including withdrawal from class. Apart from being expensive, these resources are labour intensive and time consuming. However, to be effective such resources are not only reasonable but essential if we are to meet the needs of students with a disability or special needs. Even though students have been given resources in primary school and even though immediate outcomes may not indicate significant increases in ability the resources invested are justifiable. In my schools I cannot provide these interventions for a number of reasons - The school structure /policy does not allow withdrawal - There is no framework that supports intervention - There is no staff to provide the intervention on days that I do not work as I am part-time. - The students needing these interventions have not been identified and /or the most appropriate intervention.

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.

A positive impact of the Government's 'Every Student Every School' policy has been an increased awareness for the provisions of education to students with a disability or special needs is a whole school responsibility and there has been a noticeable increase in the training modules available to teachers and that students with a disability or special needs are the sole responsibility of the special education teacher and are provided programs that withdrew students from their schools or class. However it has not resulted in the placement of specialised and/or experienced teachers capable to effectively take up the role of a LaST positions. I have met many LaST during professional learning days who feel very undertrained for their position and as I have felt on numerous occasions. The role statement for a LaST in government schools are demand a highly trained experienced teacher who has the respect of their colleagues due to their experience and qualifications. The criteria reflect the capability of a teacher who should be in a management and/or coordinator role not just a classroom teacher.

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.

Recommendation As the Learning and Support teacher (LaST) - I am not privy to the funding amounts received (increase/decreased) and have little influence in the decision on how this funding is spent by my school. In my role I am at the cold face of the issues that need to be addressed to meet the needs of my students with disabilities or special needs. There seems to be a lot of tasks//duties allocated to be because I the learning and support teacher to 'tick the box' for some of the recommendations listed rather than a whole school and/or team approach. It is imperative that Principals place an importance on communicating and implementing these recommendations. However this is not always the case depending on the schools priorities, goals and funding. Furthermore, these recommendations do not actually address the skill, knowledge or understanding that is required to practically meet the needs of our students. Recommendations regarding process and assessment are all well and good however they do not address the time/ number of hours staff need to implement and complete the tasks. More and more students are being identified in mainstream classrooms without providing teachers the necessary skills, time or knowledge to confidently meet the needs students with a disability or special need. For example I have a teacher who has a student with high needs in class of 30 students. For this teacher to be able to meet the needs of not only this student but ALL student something has to give. The recommendation: That the Department of Education and Training require all mainstream NSW Government schools to establish or be resourced by a school learning support team. I believe this has happened, however I question how effective this team might be functioning within a school. Just because a team has been

established does not meet it supports our students. In my situation, there is a team but it is really only one or two who do the work. Recommendation 14: has not happen at my school

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

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? No, I do not think it does. work with and consult with parents/carers of students with disability? In my role as LaST I make it a priority to work with, and consult with parents/carers. Many of my parents feel comfortable to approach me to address any issues or concerns, but are hesitant to meet with the senior executive as they feel there is a lack of collaboration and communication. respond to concerns and complaints raised by parents/carers of students with disability? There is a lack of communication and collaboration when addressing concerns or complaints to all stake holders to ensure everyone is on the same page.

E) Any other related matters.

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