

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

**Name:** Guildford Public School

**Date received:** 26 February 2017

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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.**

Guildford Public School has many students which require adjustments to be made within their classrooms. This includes adjustments to learning, teaching and assessments to provide all students with equitable access to the curriculum. Many teachers within our school feel they have received inadequate training to make these adjustments and the school does not receive enough funding to release teachers to work with mentors in these areas, or to send all teachers to external Professional Learning sessions which could provide adequate training. Due to the increasing number of students who require these adjustments, the school Learning and Support Team is inundated with referrals and the wait time for students to access the support they need can take several terms. There is also a significant time lag between identifying needs and making reasonable adjustments for students. In terms of students in need accessing the school counsellor, our number of students is high and time to access the counsellor is very low. Our school counsellor allocation is only 2.5 days and students are often waitlisted to be seen by our counsellor. The integration funding for students from our school is inadequate and does not meet the needs of all students. The time between applying for this funding and receiving the too low amount is too long. There is also a lack of understanding around integration funding by general classroom teachers not involved in the Learning and Support team. Guildford Public School has had many students over time who have needed a support unit placement. Acquiring a placement for these students has taken up to more than one year. The recurring feedback that has been provided has included that there is a lack of available placements and that there are students with higher needs who are prioritised. In the interim of students being declined a placement and receiving one, minimal additional support (resources, including human resources or funding) was provided to our school. Additional funding and resources, including human resources, for these students would greatly and immediately improve their access to the curriculum. This funding would also prevent other students within their classes from being unable to access the curriculum as human resource support would be increased, i.e. by the LaS teacher. Students at

Guildford Public School have not received adequate or timely support from the Educational Services team due to the need for extreme incidents to occur before being able to have this access. This obviously stems from the Educational Services Team having a large number of students to support and limited time and resources to support them with. We should have the funding, resources and access to avoid major incidents rather than trying to fix them after they have already occurred. Some additional areas in which Guildford Public School lacks adequate resources include: - The lack of time and space to have and maintain ongoing consultation with the parents of our students. - Lack of release time available for teachers to write Individual Education Plans for students who require them and to create or source the additional resources that will be required to implement them. - Access to specialist teachers and teachers with special education training for support, mentoring and ideas. - Very limited access for in class support from a Learning Support Teacher for students in need relative to the number of students who require this support. - Limited ability to provide equitable access to students with and without a disability due to being unable to make reasonable adjustments in a timely manner to the students who need them, which then disrupts other students within classes.

**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.**

The reallocation of nine categories of support teachers into the single role of a Learning and Support (LaS) teacher has increased the amount of stress placed on the teacher in this position. The main stresses involved arise from the need of this teacher to develop the skills and knowledge without time and adequate training to support students outside of their sphere of expertise. Such as a learning and support teacher with knowledge and skills on supporting students academically now being expected to adequately support students with behavioural issues without having any qualifications for that. This is the case at Guildford Public School. The reallocation of Assistant Principals Learning Assistance and Assistant Principals Behaviour to the single role of Assistant Principal Learning and Support has reduced the access to people of a higher level of qualification and experience to those who need support. It has also increased the pressure of those Assistant Principals Learning and Support to provide knowledge and assistance outside of their experience, expertise and training. The use of the Student Learning Needs Index based on NAPLAN results to allocate flexible funding and LaS Teachers has significantly damaged student access to the necessary support. If students who need support happen to perform well on this particular day the school no longer receives the funding that is needed to support them on a regular basis for the next learning period. Students with low level needs now being catered for by the Low Level Adjustment for Disability Resource Allocation Model Equity loading has put the load to support the students back onto their school with no real additional funding, i.e. At Guildford Public School we have to use money from another allocation to try and make up some of the needed money to support students, forcing us to lose money from other needed areas within the school. Guildford Public School has limited knowledge of the expanded implementation of online training modules for teachers, specialist courses for teachers and retraining programs. These need to be publicised more efficiently. In regards to teachers undertaking such training, time is a very large factor. There is no additional funding for relief to provide time for teachers to complete this training and so the training must be completed in the teachers own time. Considering the hours most teachers work this is not feasible. At Guildford Public School we have a limited amount of specialist teacher presence and it does not effectively support the quantity of student needs within our school. Our LaS Teacher lacks the amount of time that would be required to support all students in need at our school. There is also a great time difference between the referral of students and the implementation of support due to lack of human resources. The implementation of ESES has not improved the immediate access to additional support within our school to meet the educational needs of all students with a disability. In terms of special schools as centres of expertise our school receives no support from them and is unaware of any resources made available by them. We are unaware of any networks provided by specialist schools to support students within our

setting. The implementation of ESES has not raised awareness of the Department's Personalised Learning and Support Signposting Tool (PLASST) in our workplace. A limited number of staff are aware of this program or its uses. It is not consistently used to support the learning needs of individual students within our school or to collaborate with the parents of such students. More information and awareness raising of PLASST within schools should be implemented. The implementation of ESES has not enhanced specialist support for students with a disability. Though we receive limited resources for students with high or complex additional learning and support needs we do not receive enough funding to employ enough additional human resources to adequately assist with this. Regarding the Department's principles for using RAM funding for students requiring low level adjustment for disability our school:

- Has been provided increased access to physical resources however, does not receive an adequate amount of funding to employ the number of SLSOs to support the number of students requiring them.
- Has improved but not satisfied the needs and means to meet obligations to students under the Commonwealth Disability Standards for Education 2005
- Has increased the participation and engagement of students in learning, i.e. through being able to purchase more technology and physical resources but not as adequately as is required due to lack of human resources to support students with low level disabilities.
- Has developed a positive and welcoming school culture for some of our community members, e.g. through the P&C, Parent's Cafe and the employment of CLOs part time. However, due to the number of ethnic groups within our community we desperately need more funding to employ other CLOs to be effectively inclusive of all students and their families in our community.
- Has provided teachers some training to deliver quality teaching to students, however, not nearly an adequate amount considering the complex needs of our school community, i.e. all teachers are not adequately trained to support every student within our school.
- Has employed a Speech Pathologist two days per week to support students in need, however, this does not adequately support all students within our school who require this service. Thirteen classes have to be visited in this short amount of time. We lack sufficient funds to employ an Occupational Therapist to support students with needs in that area.
- Is unable to provide timely access to specialist support for students and their teachers within the school due to having such a large volume of students requiring support. Students are waitlisted depending on their level of need and some students wait several terms for their support.

**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.**

The Department of Education has failed to acknowledge and accept the widespread concern about the unmet demand for special education places within NSW Government schools. They have failed to undertake immediate action by investigating this unmet demand and publishing its results. They have not increased the number of special education classes to adequately support the number of placements required by students, resulting in schools, including ours, having to repeatedly complete timely access requests to have students supported in a way that will provide them equitable access to the curriculum. Furthermore, they have dissolved the language support classes which are particularly relevant in areas such as Guildford. In regards to funding, Guildford Public School has received a very limited amount for students with a disability. The amount that has been received is extremely inadequate to support the number of students with additional learning needs at our school. In fact, funding has been reduced by the reclassification of disabilities. The Department of Education has also not provided our school with the funding to ensure that one of our learning and support team members has a special education qualification to adequately support students in need. No clear guidelines have been provided regarding this, including how these additional qualifications would be implemented. Some additional issues within our school relating to this area include:

- Lack of funding for the release of teachers to develop Individual Education Plans for students.
- The need, but lack of availability of formal training for School Learning Support Officers
- Limited access to Multi-disciplinary teams for professional and allied health support services for students due to lack of time

of their end and due to their location.

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

At Guildford Public School we have established meaningful relationships with the parents and carers of students with a disability, however, it is not always possible for this to be done in a timely manner. Due to lack of funding and human resources to support our school we have limited time with specialist support, such as a school counsellor. We do consult with the parents and carers of students with a disability relating to the progress and needs of their child, however, there are often lengthy time delays for appointments and testing.

**E) Any other related matters.**

Our school needs the full implementation of the GONSKI funding to adequately support our students, staff and community. Funding which is provided needs to be allocated more appropriately to the situation and to the needs of the individual children within our school. Funding needs to be flexible in terms of specific students, i.e. we need to have the ability to get students into the best placement possible or receive adequate resources in a timely manner to provide them with the best opportunity to make progress towards learning outcomes. It is the right of all students to receive an education. By not supporting our schools with the appropriate funding you are greatly disadvantaging them and hindering their future opportunities in life.

**Organisation** Guildford Public School