



The Hon. Adrian Piccoli MP
Minister for Education



Ms Ronda Miller
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
Office of the Clerk
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

MT12/1304

Dear Ms Miller

I write in response to a petition lodged with the Legislative Assembly of the NSW Parliament by Mrs Leslie Williams MP, Member for Port Macquarie on 12 September 2012, regarding Every Student, Every School and the Local Schools, Local Decisions initiatives in NSW public schools.

The NSW Government is strongly committed to providing quality education services in its schools for all students, including those with additional learning and support needs associated with disability, ensuring that every student with disability receives the support that they need for their learning across all of our 2,240 NSW public schools. This commitment is reflected in the budget for special education, more than \$1.2 billion this financial year, the largest ever special education budget.

There are no plans to reduce the NSW Government funding that supports students with special needs. In fact, there has been an increase of over \$69 million in resources directly allocated to schools across New South Wales under the Every Student, Every School initiative.

Every Student, Every School is a broad strategy comprising a range of projects designed to be implemented together to build the capacity of all NSW public schools in meeting the diverse educational needs of students with special needs wherever they enrol and the highly valued teachers and support staff who work with them. It is about maximising the learning experiences throughout schooling for every student, all day, every day, as well as maximising the on-going direct professional teacher support for classroom teachers so that they can do their work.

Expanded access is also being provided to existing training options through Every Student, Every School, including access to a range of professional online learning courses for teachers and support staff in areas of special education needs. These courses have been utilised by the Department of Education and Communities since 2009 and are highly rated in feedback from more than 12,000 teachers, principals and support staff in NSW public schools.

Hastings Public School staff have engaged in the online learning modules including Understanding Autistic Spectrum Disorders, Understanding Motor Co-ordination Difficulties, Understanding and Managing Behaviour, Inclusion for Learners with Speech, Language and Communication Needs, Understanding Dyslexia and Significant Difficulties in Reading.

Through the Every Student, Every School initiative, Learning and Support resourcing allocations totalling more than \$219 million have been made to schools in July 2012 to support students with additional learning and support needs. These allocations comprise two components; specialist staffing and flexible funding. Each component includes a base determined by a school's student enrolment and a supplement determined by an index that reflects the number of students with additional learning need within each school.

While the base specialist staffing and flexible funding allocations are determined by a school's total student enrolment K-12, the supplements are determined by the student learning need index (SLNI) drawn from NAPLAN data.

This needs based index is drawn from a school's previous three years of longitudinal NAPLAN data; for 2012 allocations, the data from 2009, 2010 and 2011 was used. The SLNI is constructed around the number of students in regular classes in the school who perform in the bottom 10% through the national testing program. These NAPLAN data sets identify the number of students who have additional learning and support needs.

This index has been used to allocate learning difficulties resources in NSW public schools since 2003 and was developed in collaboration with peak groups including principals, parents and the unions.

Specialist staffing allocations to schools remain the same for three years while flexible funding allocations are adjusted annually using each school's actual enrolments and the SLNI.

This provides all regular schools across New South Wales with an equitable and consistent allocation of specialist resources for learning and support.

Students do not need a formal disability diagnosis to access support through these resources. With a significant increase in resources directly allocated to schools under this initiative, more than 400 regular schools have on-going specialist teacher support directly in the school for the first time.

School principals have the flexibility to decide how best to use their allocated resources for learning and support, including pooling or sharing their resources with other schools to respond to local needs and priorities and using flexible funding for additional teacher or teacher aide time in the school.

For 2012, Hastings Public School has a range of funding and support available for every student who requires adjusted learning and support. Through the Every Student, Every School initiative, the school's specialist teacher allocation is four days per week as well as annual flexible funding allocation of more than \$20,000.

Students in regular classes with moderate or high learning and support needs with intellectual disability, mental health disorder or autism, and students with physical disability or sensory impairment will continue to be supported through the Integration Funding Support program. In 2012, at Hastings Public School, this annual funding allocation continues to be more than \$30,000.

As a new way of working, we recognise that there will be a period of transition where schools adjust to different arrangements and make changes at the school level to ensure continuing and on-going support for their students with additional learning needs.

The Department is working closely with all NSW public schools during the transition period for Every Student, Every School. Schools across the state are being provided with considerable training and information as well as specific transition support from both the regional and departmental level to help them through this period, where required during 2012 and 2013.

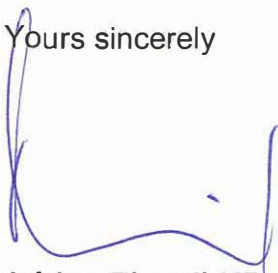
For Semester 2, 2012, Hastings Public School has been allocated an additional \$20,000 from state and regional resources to support the school's transition to the new model.

Further support is being provided to Hastings Public School in the form of a Program Review, one of three processes included in the Department's School Development Policy. A Program Review will offer an open opportunity to staff, parents, community and students to provide their input during the process that will be facilitated by a team of experts and school community members and will culminate in the development of an action plan for the school.

Finally, under Local Schools, Local Decisions, the current class size policy will continue. Principals will be able to choose teachers based on their quality and skills required to best meet the needs of their students.

Principals will remain the education leader. Local Schools, Local Decisions will provide principals with greater flexibility to prioritise school resources to better meet the needs of students, staff and the school community ideas. We are also simplifying current processes and removing the red tape that distracts from teaching and learning.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Adrian Piccoli', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Adrian Piccoli MP
Minister for Education

27 SEP 2012

cc: Mrs Leslie Williams MP
Member for Port Macquarie