

personalised learning and support for students with additional needs: every student every school...

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The NSW public school system is large and complex. In 2013 there are more than 740,000 students enrolled in more than 2,200 primary, secondary, central and special schools. More than 50,000 classrooms operate across the state each day.

Some students need additional support to access the full range of education opportunities and to achieve success. These additional learning and support needs may relate to a range of circumstances for the student, their family and their schools. They may be short term or ongoing throughout schooling. They may relate to disability or difficulties in learning or behaviour from a variety of causes.

Over time, a wide range of specialist services and programs have been put in place to provide additional support for students with disability and special needs in public schools.

These include:

- specialist services and programs targeted for individual students; and
- programs that provide specialist resources to schools to support students experiencing difficulties in learning.

These programs and services play an important part in the full range of services provided for all students in public schools. Concentrating efforts in highly specialised approaches for certain students, or for certain aspects of their learning and support in isolation, is no longer adequate.

Students with additional learning and support needs in our schools

Around 90,000 students, or 12% of the total NSW DEC school population, have a disability and/or additional needs relating to difficulties in learning or behaviour.

Of these 90,000 students:

- Around 35,000 (4.7% of all students) have a confirmed disability against the Department's criteria for its targeted specialist services: intellectual, physical, hearing, vision, mental health and autism.

- A further 55,000 (7.3% of all students) have additional needs relating to disability or difficulties in learning or behaviour, including dyslexia, reading and/or communication delay and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

Over time, the proportion of students with confirmed disability enrolled in NSW public schools has increased from 1.9% in 1988 to 6% in 2011.

The changing profile of students

The number of students in NSW public schools with disability or additional learning and support needs has increased considerably in recent years. In particular, there has been a sharp increase in the number of students with autism spectrum disorders and students with mental health disorders.

The reasons for this growth are complex. However, the experience in NSW schools

is consistent with that of other education jurisdictions nationally and internationally.

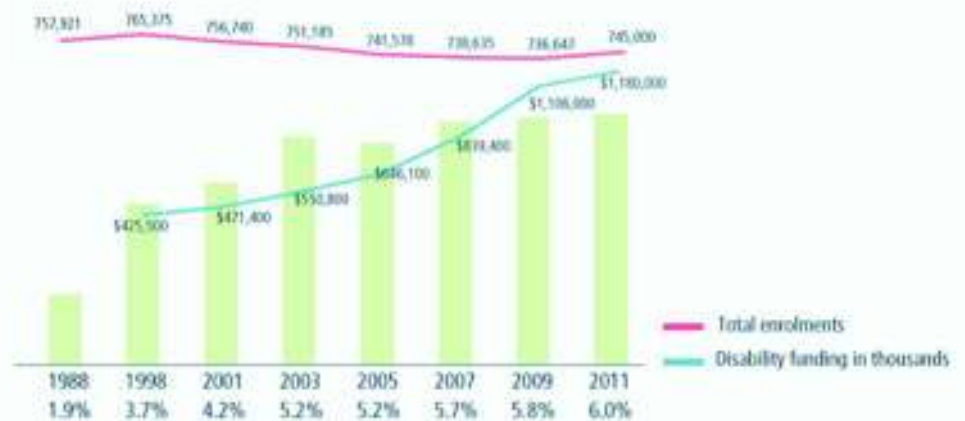
The changing nature of service delivery

Students with additional learning and support needs are enrolled in every school and are being taught in every classroom. The current specialist service model recognises the type of disability that a student has rather than the additional educational needs of each student.

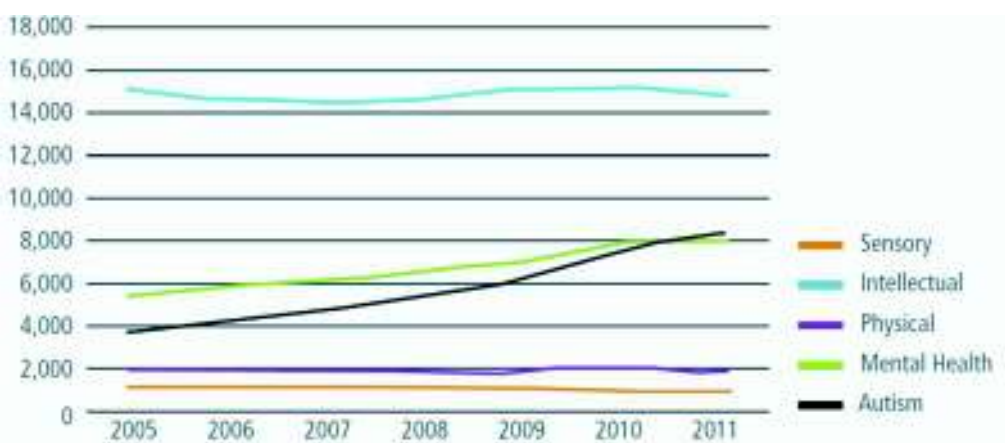
Lack of access to services in remote and rural areas of NSW is also reported by parents and schools to be a major challenge in providing additional support for students.

Obligations and expectations around disability

The introduction of the Disability Standards for Education in 2005 has contributed to changed expectations about access and participation in education for all students



Annual enrolment of students with confirmed disability – showing percentage of total enrolments



Students with confirmed disability in NSW government schools by disability type, 2005-2011

with disability. It has also changed expectations about how students with disability are supported to access learning experiences that their non-disabled peers take for granted.

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In education, there is an increasing emphasis on every student acquiring a common set of core skills to equip them for further learning and adult life. Across the community there is also a growing emphasis on a ‘person-centred’ approach to the way services are provided to support the needs and aspirations of people with disability and their families.

Education is a key area of focus for the National Disability Strategy, together with other important areas such as health and wellbeing, personal and community support, rights protection, economic security and accessible communities. The need to find better ways of ensuring schools meet the additional learning and support needs of every student with disability is consistent with directions under this strategy.

How Every Student Every School (ESES) works

A specialist teacher is available in every mainstream school to support students with additional learning and support needs and their classroom teachers.

This is achieved through the re-organisation of some specialist support services. This reorganisation has directly allocated more than 1,800 existing specialist teachers to schools. These allocations will be adjusted every three years. Funding will be adjusted annually to reflect changes in school needs.

Principals, through their school learning



and support teams, are responsible for determining how resources are used to best meet the learning and support needs of students in their school. This will enable more students to access support without the need for formal applications and paperwork outside the school. Schools have the flexibility to work together to share or pool their resources to provide specific programs or activities to support learning outcomes for students in their schools.

Students with a confirmed disability who have moderate, complex or highly specialised targeted support in mainstream schools will continue to be supported by existing arrangements. Special classes in regular schools and special schools will also continue to operate under existing arrangements.

Special schools as centres of expertise

Specialist schools and settings have developed deep knowledge and understanding of learners with additional learning and support needs. There is opportunity for schools with knowledge, expertise and specialist resources for supporting students with intellectual disability, mental health and behaviour needs, to collaborate, develop and share their knowledge more widely across the school system. This is achieved by funding special schools to undertake locally designed projects in the following areas of priority need:

- Assistive or augmentative technology and software as a vehicle for students to access the curriculum
- Case management of students with

high and complex support needs in health and/or behaviour (including mental health) and collaborative interagency practice to support students and their teachers.

- The provision of support and adjustments to learning programs to allow students whose communication delay or disability prevents them from accessing regular curriculum outcomes.
- Supporting transition needs of students with disabilities, including preparation, transfer, induction and consolidation of student’s access and engagement in education.
- Building learning and support plans through collaborative parent and community partnerships.

Each local project will incorporate a networking strategy integral to its implementation to build and share knowledge and expertise across schools. Networking strategies will be integrated across schools within their region. Peer support groups comprising principals from intellectual disability, mental health/behaviour and hospital school settings, together with academic contributors, will support the development of high-quality projects and outcomes.

Further information about Every Student, Every School: Learning and Support can be accessed at: www.det.nsw.edu.au/every-student-every-school

