



Frequently asked questions

Every Student, Every School

Every Student, Every School: Learning and Support is an integrated strategy for building the capability of all NSW public schools to improve outcomes for students with disability and additional learning and support needs. It provides a structure, or framework, for improving and enhancing learning and support in our schools.

1. Is it a new program for supporting students with disabilities?

Every Student, Every School: Learning and Support is not a single program. More than 20 separate projects will operate throughout the NSW public school system in 2012 and 2013 through this strategy supported by an additional \$47.9 million provided under the national partnership: *More support for students with disabilities*. The projects will help to build a strong and robust framework for learning and support in all of our schools, now and into the future.

2. What is the learning and support framework?

Five key elements provide a framework for strong and robust learning and support for students with additional educational needs. These elements are:

- an approach to teaching and learning that has high expectations for every student,
- the curriculum we deliver to provide rigorous, meaningful and dignified learning for every student,
- collaborating with parents and other agencies where needed to develop and implement personalised adjustments for the learning and support needs of students,

- teacher quality and the provision of sustained high quality professional learning and support for teachers to address the diverse learning needs of students, and
- our accountability to students under the *Disability Standards for Education 2005*.

The range of projects outlined in *Every Student, Every School: Learning and Support* will build and strengthen these elements of learning and support across all our schools.

3. What are the projects that will be implemented through Every Student, Every School: Learning and Support?

There are 5 project areas or clusters, incorporating more than 20 integrated activities. These 5 project clusters are:

- an extensive range of options for professional learning for teachers and other education personnel
- enhanced support for students with low levels of additional learning and support needs in regular classes through the establishment of a specialist learning and support teacher in every school

- establishing our special schools as centres of expertise through networked projects across schools
- developing instruments and materials for teachers to better understand and meet additional learning and support needs of students.
- access to expert knowledge, improved information and support.

4. How many students will benefit from this strategy?

There are more than 90,000 students who have additional learning and support needs currently enrolled in more than 2,200 NSW public schools. This includes the full range of students who need adjustments to access and participate in learning under the *Disability Standards for Education 2005*. It includes 35,000 students that we currently confirm as having a disability and a further 55,000 students with additional learning and support needs relating to difficulties in learning or behaviour.

Every Student, Every School: Learning and Support provides a focus on learning and support for all students with disability and additional educational needs in our schools.

5. Which schools will benefit?

All schools are incorporated in the project activities that will take place through this initiative.

6. How will the projects in the Every Student, Every School: Learning and Support initiative be funded?

The Australian Government is providing an additional \$47.9 million to NSW over two years under the national partnership agreement: *More Support for Students with Disabilities*. The funding will be used to support projects agreed under the national partnership.

This funding builds on the existing funding for students with disability provided by the NSW Government, \$1.18 billion this financial year.

Non-government education jurisdictions have separate funding agreements directly with the Commonwealth.

7. Why is the funding through the national partnership being used for projects in NSW public schools in this way?

The national partnership: *More Support for Students with Disabilities* is intended to build the capacity of schools and teachers to better support students with disabilities in all schools and to improve responses under the Commonwealth's *Disability Standards for Education 2005*.

Under the national partnership agreement, the additional funding must be used for projects that will deliver outputs agreed with the Australian Government. There is also an expectation that the additional funding will lever off other investments that the NSW Government is making in public schools to support students with disability.

Every Student, Every School: Learning and Support has been developed to build on the achievements and existing State investment in government schools and use the additional short term funding to achieve sustainable outcomes.

8. What is the rationale for the approach to learning and support through Every Student, Every School?

Our strategy in Every Student, Every School: Learning and Support is informed by key facts:

- The number of students in our schools with additional learning and support needs has increased considerably in recent years, particularly the numbers of students with autism and students with mental health problems. The majority of these students have lower level additional learning and support needs and are enrolled in our mainstream classes, reflecting the preferences of their parents.
- The current specialist service system in our schools recognises the type of disability a student has rather than the additional educational needs of each student.
- Expectations about access and participation for students with a disability who have additional learning and support needs are guided by the Commonwealth *Disability Standards for Education 2005* in addition to significant national reform in the area of disability.

Through Every Student, Every School: Learning and Support we are establishing a new way of doing business for students with additional learning and support needs and their teachers that responds to the changing profile of students in our schools and contemporary expectations about support for students with disability.

9. How does Every Student, Every School: Learning and Support relate to the trial in Illawarra and South East Region?

A new model for supporting students with additional needs in regular classes was trialled in 221 schools in the Illawarra and South East Region from the start of Term 2, 2010. The trial was a response to continued lobbying and concern from parents, teachers and principals about the need to increase support for students with disability and additional needs in regular schools.

The model that was trialled was informed by extensive consultation since May 2009 and the work of a stakeholder reference group comprised of education, parent and community and union representatives.

The model that was trialled provided a specialist teacher and funding in every regular school to support students with low levels of additional learning needs and their classroom teachers. This was achieved by re-organising existing specialist resources that had related functions and allocating the resources directly to schools using formulae based on school size and student learning need. More information about the trial is available on the Department's website at www.schools.nsw.edu.au/studentsupport/programs/schoollearning/index.php.

Every Student, Every School: Learning and Support is different from the trial in Illawarra. While it builds on the experience and learning gained through the trial, Every Student, Every School is a broad strategy with five interrelated activities that are designed to be implemented together during 2012 and 2013.

These five interrelated activities are:

- an extensive range of options for professional learning for teachers and other education personnel
- enhanced support for students with low levels of additional learning and support need in regular classes through the establishment of a specialist learning and support teacher allocated to every regular school
- establishing our special schools as centres of expertise through networked projects across schools
- developing instruments and materials for teachers to use to better understand and meet additional learning and support needs of students, and
- access to expert knowledge, improved information and support.

Every Student, Every School: Learning and Support will support the establishment of a specialist teacher in every regular school, adjusted each triennium, to support students with low levels of

additional needs as one part of our approach to strengthened learning and support across all schools. More than \$39.4 million existing funding will be allocated directly to schools annually to support these students. The national partnership will provide additional support for regions and schools to transition to the new arrangements.

This is complemented with substantial professional learning and support for a wide range of teachers, the development of a new functional assessment tool and resources to support teachers in all school settings to better understand and respond to the learning and support needs of students, linkages between specialist and regular schools and the development of improved access to expert support and information.

10. Is the additional funding through the national partnership providing more teachers?

No, the national partnership cannot provide funding for additional recurrent positions.

The establishment of a specialist learning and support teacher in every regular school will be achieved through re-organising more than 600 existing specialist teacher positions that support students with additional needs through a range of related programs. More than 1,300 of these positions are already allocated directly to schools for a three year period. This initiative will increase this number to more than 1,900 including 96 assistant principal learning and support positions that will continue to have an ongoing role in providing further additional support to schools.

Additional funding provided through the national partnership agreement will support this transition, along with professional learning and support for teachers as well as other projects that are part of Every Student, Every School: Learning and Support.

11. Which positions will be allocated to regular schools as learning and support teachers through the project aimed at support for students with disability in regular schools?

More than 1,800 learning and support teacher positions will be allocated directly to primary, secondary and central schools, adjusted each triennium, to support students with low levels of additional need. This is a 30% increase in the number of specialist positions already allocated directly to schools. It includes existing specialist positions that support schools and that are not available in every school.

These positions include the following:

- support teacher learning assistance, including reading and language
- early school support teacher
- itinerant support teacher behaviour
- support teacher integrated IM
- itinerant support teacher integration
- outreach teacher (autism, ED, special education)
- school learning support coordinator.

In addition, 96 assistant principals positions in learning assistance and behaviour will continue and be known as assistant principals learning and support, providing additional specialist assistance to schools where needed.

12. Will the allocation of learning and support teachers to regular schools mean that there will no longer be specialist positions available to support students in need?

Through this initiative, every NSW public school will have direct access to a specialist teacher allocated directly to the school.

In addition, several existing specialist positions will remain unchanged. These include:

- itinerant support teachers (early intervention)
- itinerant support teachers hearing
- itinerant support teachers vision
- support teachers transition

These positions will continue to provide support for schools under current guidelines.

13. What about students with moderate or high levels of learning and support needs?

Students with disability who have moderate or high levels of need and who are enrolled in regular classes will continue to be supported through the Integration Funding Support program, without change. This includes:

- students with sensory impairment
- students with physical disability
- students with a significant intellectual disability
- students with autism spectrum disorders who have moderate or high levels of support need
- students with mental health disorders who have moderate or high levels of support need.

14. What will happen to existing reading and language classes?

Reading and language classes are part of the learning assistance program. All learning and support positions, including existing learning assistance positions, will be allocated directly to schools. Principals in consultation with their school learning support teams and colleagues have the flexibility to contribute a component of their learning and support teacher allocation to the operation of a local language or reading program where they identify a priority need. Regions will work closely with schools to plan how best to meet the needs of students with additional complex learning and support needs in reading and language, as required.

15. Will the changes to learning and support in regular schools impact on other support classes?

No, the provision of other specialist support classes in regions remains unchanged. The establishment, disestablishment and location of support classes is part of an annual planning process undertaken by regions based on analysis of data about parent demand for support class places.

On average, about 90 additional support classes have been established each year over the last five years. This represents more than 3,000 additional support class places in this period.

16. How will NSW funding to public schools be affected by this strategy?

Commonwealth funding provided through the national partnership over the next two years is in addition to existing funding that New South Wales spends supporting students with disability. New South Wales funding has increased every year, reflecting student need. Expenditure on students with disability attending NSW public schools has increased by 97% over the last 8 years, from over \$600 million in 2003/04 to more than \$1.18 billion in 2011/2012. Growth in New South Wales funding supporting students with disability in public schools is expected to continue given current projections of the numbers of students entering school over the next decade.

\$39.4 million existing NSW funding will be allocated to regular schools to support students with low levels of additional learning and support need through this strategy. This incorporates funding from the learning assistance program and a portion of the integration funding support program supporting students with mental health disorders and autism spectrum disorders who have low level additional needs. Learning assistance program funding is capped and this will remain the case through learning and support. Integration funding support however changes each year reflecting student need in addition to annual CPI adjustments. This portion of funding

for learning and support will continue to be linked to integration funding support and will reflect any adjustments to the total integration funding program funds that occur each year.

17. Will the number of staff that support students with disability and special needs be reduced through this strategy?

There will be no reduction in the more than 4,675 full time equivalent specialist teachers working in public schools across NSW with students with disability and additional learning needs.

Like growth in funding, the numbers of positions that support students with disability have increased over recent years, reflecting student need and the choices parents make about schooling options for their children. By way of example, specialist teacher positions supporting students with disability in mainstream schools have increased by more than 150% in the last five years.

18. Will there be a reduction in the number of school learning support officers (formerly known as teachers aides)?

There will be no reduction in over 4,000 permanent school learning support officer full time equivalent positions now employed to work in regular or special classes and schools.

This initiative will not reduce funding. Funding will be allocated to schools annually, according to student learning needs, enabling allocations to schools to be adjusted according to changing needs of schools.

This will continue to give schools the maximum opportunity to assess their specific needs and then plan for and support their students in the most effective and timely way.

Principals and teachers are best placed to determine where and how extra additional support is provided to individual or groups of students. Decision making about how to best use

additional funding to maximise support for the changing learning support needs of students will remain with the principal of each school. This has been in place for more than 15 years.

19. Why is Every Student, Every School: Learning and Support focused on only two years?

The national partnership provides additional short term funding in the 2012 and 2013 school years for projects that will build the capacity of all schools to meet the needs of students with disability.

This additional short term funding provides an important opportunity to support a substantial shift in our approach to learning and support for every student with a disability in every school.

At the end of the two year additional funding period, our school system will be in a better position to meet the learning and support needs of students with a disability in a sustainable way into the future.

20. What consultation occurred in the development of the Department's strategy for implementing the national partnership?

The Department consulted with education, parent and community stakeholders across a range of organisations and representative bodies in the development of our strategy for establish a new approach to learning and support under national partnership agreement. This includes representatives from primary, secondary and special school principal groups, parent and community groups, university sector, and disability advocacy groups representing children with disabilities and their families.

These consultations indicated consistent agreement with the foundation elements of effective learning and support for students with disabilities and strong support for the areas of focus for projects to support its development in schools.

21. Who is responsible for implementing Every Student, Every School: Learning and Support?

All parts of the NSW public school system will take part in implementing learning and support through Every Student, Every School.

Each Region has a dedicated senior officer with lead responsibility for implementation. Regions will provide more detailed briefings and information for principals, teachers, and parent and community groups about the local implementation of learning and support.

An implementation team in the Department's central office will be responsible for the overall coordination of projects through Every Student, Every School: Learning and Support and for reporting to the Commonwealth on progress.

22. When will all the project activities in Every Student, Every School: Learning and Support be implemented?

While some activities will start straight away, others will take time and be implemented progressively over 2012 and 2013.

For example, some professional learning will commence immediately through regions in accordance with local needs and priorities. Other professional learning will be developed during 2012 for delivery in later 2012 and 2013.

Work will also start immediately on projects being undertaken by special schools, and projects to enhance expert support and information across the NSW public school system.

Planning for the establishment of a learning and support teacher presence in every regular school will begin in Term 1 and continue into Term 2 for commencement in Term 3, 2012.

Work on a new functional assessment tool and guidelines for personalised learning and support will be fast-tracked for anticipated completion this year.

23. Where can I get more information about the projects and their progress over 2012 and 2013?

The publication *Every Student, Every School: Learning and Support* provides more information about the strategy and the project activities that are included in this initiative. Updated information will be made available on the Department's website on an ongoing basis.

Further information

[www.det.nsw.edu.au/
every-student-every-school](http://www.det.nsw.edu.au/every-student-every-school)