

every student, every school ...

Every Student, Every School – strengthening education for students with additional learning and support needs in NSW public schools

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On 27 March 2012, the NSW Minister for Education, the Hon. Adrian Piccoli MP, announced the implementation of a learning and support framework in all 2,240 NSW public schools across the state, through a strategy known as 'Every Student, Every School'.

Implementation of the learning and support framework is being facilitated through a wide range of projects that are designed to strengthen educational experiences and outcomes for the full range of students with disability in NSW public schools and their classroom teachers and support staff. Projects are being progressively implemented in 2012 and 2013.

This important reform strategy builds on existing NSW Government commitments in special education and is supported by additional funding over 2 years from the Australian Government under the 'More Support for Students with Disabilities' National Partnership Agreement.

The Catholic and Independent school sectors are also benefitting from this National Partnership through their own funding agreements with the Australian Government.

Every Student, Every School is needed because currently there are around 90,000 students in NSW public schools who have additional learning needs because of disability. Around 80 per cent of these students are enrolled in regular classes in their local public school. Many students need adjustments in their day to day learning, whether or not they have a formal disability diagnosis. We need to make sure that we provide every student with the best possible education that we can, and build the capabilities of teachers and support staff to meet the educational needs of students and obligations under the *Commonwealth Disability Standards for Education 2005*.

Every Student, Every School is delivering an increased range of professional learning opportunities for teachers and support staff in NSW public schools to understand and respond to the individual learning and

support needs of their students. This includes scholarships for more teachers to gain a Masters level degree in special education. In 2012, the Department of Education and Communities provided scholarships through this initiative to 158 teachers and a further 200 scholarships are on offer in 2013.

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Access to existing training options in areas of learning for students with disability is also being expanded for more teachers and support staff. This training includes tutor-supported online learning courses in dyslexia and significant reading difficulties, speech, language and communication needs, autism spectrum disorders, motor coordination difficulties and understanding and managing behaviour. These courses have been utilised by the Department since 2009 and are highly rated in feedback from more than 10,000 individual teachers, principals and support staff in NSW public schools to date. A new online learning course to support regular classroom teachers' understanding of hearing loss will be introduced in term 1, 2013.

New accredited training in the *Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992* and its Standards for Education is also being developed for implementation in term 1, 2013.

Since the start of term 3, 2012, every regular NSW public school is now allocated a package of Learning and Support resources, made up of 2 components - specialist teacher positions and annual flexible funding. These resources support students with lower levels of additional learning and support needs and their class teachers, where and when that support is needed. 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, many schools now have ongoing specialist teacher support directly in the school for the first time. Principals, through their school learning and support teams, have the flexibility to decide how best to

use their allocated Learning and Support resources to meet the needs of their students, including using flexible funding for additional teacher or learning support officer (teachers' aide) time in the school.

Students with a disability who have moderate and high level additional learning and support needs, continue to be supported under current guidelines for individually targeted services in regular and special schools.

Every Student, Every School will also better equip teachers in all school settings to identify and respond to the diverse learning needs of their students. The Department is developing new tools and materials for teachers and schools to identify the skills, abilities and needs of their students in collaboration with parents, and to develop personalise learning and support for students who need it.

NSW public special schools (Schools for Specific Purposes) have been provided with additional funding in 2012 and 2013 to develop and implement local projects that will network their specialist expertise and project resources with regular schools. These projects are responding to a range of priority areas including: use of technology for curriculum access; case management and support for students with complex needs; supporting transition needs of students with disability; and developing learning and support plans through collaborative partnerships with parents and communities.

The Department is currently developing a new website to support school communities with improved information and resources on the range of ways that NSW public schools support students with disability. Research is being undertaken with a wide range of stakeholders to inform the design of the website, including parents, teachers, regional staff supporting schools and other NSW government agencies. The new website will be launched later this year.

In the meantime, further details of Every Student, Every School and its full range of projects, including a factsheet for parents about support for students in regular classes and information about teacher scholarships, can be found on the Department's website at <http://www.dec.nsw.gov.au/what-we-offer/education-and-training/disability-support/every-student-every-school>. ●

