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# **BUILDING INCLUSIVE SCHOOLS: PATHWAYS TO THE FUTURE WORKING PARTY FOUR REPORT**

## **REVIEW OF EDUCATIONAL SERVICES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS**

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### **PRINCIPLE 4 Adjustments are provided on a needs basis and are equitably resourced**

The following indicators assist in describing the principle in practice:

- a consistent and co-ordinated system-wide procedure for the identification of students who require teaching and learning adjustments is in place;
- all stakeholders contribute to the identification and assessment of students' learning needs;
- an allocative mechanism based on educational need provides resourcing for appropriate adjustments;
- schools are supported to be flexible in planning and implementing appropriate programs for students who require teaching and learning adjustments;
- schools demonstrate accountability in the use of allocated resources.

### **Scope**

The working party was required to formulate recommendations that:

- ensure equitable allocation of resources for students who require teaching and learning adjustments;
- ensure adjustments are resourced according to student need;
- ensures a focus on teaching and learning needs and curriculum arrangements;
- allow parents, teachers and others to share a common understanding of the needs of students who require teaching and learning adjustments;
- provide a basis for detailed planning and programming;
- provide a transparent approach to the way decisions are reached and educational arrangements are made.

The stated aim of the working party was to:

*Develop a framework to inform the development of a needs-based allocative mechanism for students who require teaching and learning adjustments.*

- A framework means developing descriptions of the most promising model of resource allocation for students who require teaching and learning adjustments.
- Describing a model means outlining the allocative mechanism (specifically) - outlining how funds are allocated and the form support is to be provided, who is eligible for additional funding and why, the decision making processes underpinning funding at each level and who is responsible for those decisions and describing at what level the management or control of funding resides.
- A priority is to explain the mechanisms that will be used to fund students with very high needs (3%) of the school population.
- It is also necessary to propose recommendations on how students who require teaching and learning adjustments (up to 18% of the school population) should be funded.

### **Action**

The working party met on five occasions for a total of 13 hours over a five-week period.

### **Issues**

A number of principles guided discussions:

- Strategies to decentralise authority and responsibility for funding use while still allocating the amounts centrally and regionally.
- Systems and sectors have been devising a number of ways to develop management skills and to increase local decision making.
- Funding should support teaching and learning needs of students with disabilities and therefore assist students with disabilities to achieve learning outcomes.
- Focussing criteria on the curriculum intervention seems to be more acceptable, given that it is after all, the intervention that costs money – rather than the difficulty per se.

- Concepts of the underlying funding system and the procedures to implement it should be straightforward and avoid unnecessary complexity.
- Funding should enable for eligibility for funds to be minimised, not duplicated and to contribute to knowledge of teaching and learning and learning needs of the student with a disability.
- The funding system should enable equitable services to students with disabilities in a range of options for educational provision.
- Processes and structures to support transferring students should be supported by the funding system.
- The funding system should be designed so that integration of funding is likely to enable integration of services.

Source: *Effective funding for children and students with disabilities Ministerial Advisory Committee Students with Disabilities* Cormack M, Willis K and Winter P. 1997 A Project of National Significance - Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs

The following outcomes were seen as desirable:

- a single student profiling measure to assess necessary adjustments in the provision of teacher time, education assistant time, local funding to schools through the school grant;
- a profiling measure that will provide a needs based assessment of all necessary adjustments and deliver them to schools through processes by which all schools are resourced;
- acceptance of the general principle of equal access to all adjustments based on an assessment of needs, rather than by category of disability;
- a student profile in which the assessment criteria measure curriculum intervention and therefore support the teaching and learning needs of students;
- the endorsement of the principle of the integration of the types of funding support into one global budget that enables schools to transfer funds within pre determined guidelines and flexibly use available resources;
- a review of method of the allocation of resources (funding gateways, staffing cycle) to ensure that the aims and benefits of a flexible model are realized and not dissipated. These processes and structures will efficiently support transferring students;

- a single data base which records both the details of each student and a profile of needs and the levels of approved resourcing, provides reciprocal information to schools and all levels of the system, tracks transferring students and provides information on a daily basis;
- enhanced support for local decision making by the establishment of a consistent and reliable verification process at each district and/or service centre level;
- that a new approach to data management be adopted concentrating on daily access by all sites to a single data source and two-way communication of the approvals /verification/moderation process;
- a funding allocation to districts/service centres to be allocated based proportionally on the numbers and levels of needs of students managed. The district would assume overall management and fund reviews of allocations to students based on documented education plans for each student. That a discretionary funding base be set aside for each district and district would assume all responsibility for case management and review;
- a central office function to provide an overview of the allocation process, overall standards monitoring of the moderation / verification process, research and budget control.

#### **Recommendations from working party 4**

- The working party recommends that the Department of Education and Training allocates resources according to educational need.

*The working party endorsed the position taken with the Review of Educational Services for Students with Disabilities in Government Schools, Discussion Paper in relation to providing a renewed focus on the delivery of resources on the basis of educational need. Discussion strongly endorsed the need for one process of determining need that can be applied across all schools. It was accepted that a needs profile comprising of a number of domains, able to assess levels of needs across a range of adjustments (teacher time, education assistant time and school grant). The current arrangements provide a variety of adjustments according to the category of disability rather than a detailed assessment of the profile of needs for each student.*

- The working party recommends benchmarking be undertaken to develop effective level of service provision so that appropriate levels of support is provided based on best practice.
- That overall funding levels for existing services and levels of individual support be maintained.
- The working party recommends the Department of Education and Training develop a uniform student profile for students with high educational needs.

*The student profile will focus criteria on curriculum support or interventions and aims to support teaching and learning needs of students. The student profile will contribute to the knowledge of teaching and learning and learning needs of the student with a disability and be a basis for initial planning for each student.*

- The working party recommends that adjustments be provided to all students with high educational needs based on a detailed assessment of the profile of needs for each student.
- The working party recommends that all aspects of a student profile of needs be maintained on a single data base available across all levels of the system. The database would be required to track transferring students and report on a daily basis. (The utility of a web-enabled data set is emphasized.) That a new approach to data management be adopted concentrating on daily access by all sites to a single data source and two-way communication of the approvals /verification/moderation process.
- That a funding allocation to districts/service areas to be allocated based proportionally on the numbers and degree of needs of the students managed. The district would provide funding for further curriculum support and assume overall management and fund reviews of allocations to students based on documented education plans for each student. That a discretionary funding base be set aside for each district and district would assume all responsibility for case management and review.
- That all process between districts and schools are transparent and provide reliable moderation across the broad range of student needs.

*Discussion centred around the inconsistencies in the current range of adjustments offered to support students with disabilities on the basis of category of disability. It was viewed that in principle all students should be assessed across the range of adjustments provided in determining their level of need and should not be excluded from any particular supports.*

- The working party recommends the student profile assess the full range of adjustments (teacher time, education assistant time and student component of school grant) across all high needs students.

*Discussion strongly supported the view that within any allocative mechanism, (in particular the K-12 Staffing Formula) all resources were considered transferable (according to guidelines established) and were to be considered part of the global budget. Working party endorsed further development of the K-12 staffing formula towards a global budget.*

- The working party strongly endorses proposals to ensure that all resourcing to schools be contained within a global budget, are flexible and transferable according to set guidelines and delivered according to local needs and processes support local decision making within a framework of best practice for students with high educational needs.
- That processes specifically support students as they move schools to ensure that funds linked to students are easily transferred and available in a timely manner.
- That processes ensure continuity of funding support by ensuring review of entitlements over set periods of time and where appropriate.

*The working party recommended that processes involved in the delivery of resources be consistent and respond directly to needs of students. Discussion suggested that processes of delivering funds should be timely, able to track students and be sensitive enough to be seen to be addressing the needs of particular students with high needs. The working party cautions against the use of totally aggregated data.*

- The working party recommends that with use of the K-12 formula or the derivative of this system, an ability to track adjustments especially for students with high needs to be evident. Human resources policy and practice will be required to reflect the sensitivities involved in delivering adjustments in schools. Schools will need to continue to be able to show specific adjustments for high needs students.

### **Extending funding provision beyond students with high educational needs**

*The current arrangements ensure high levels of direct or targeted funding support for less than 3% of the student population considered to have a disability. This current group excludes students with learning disabilities, mild impairments or behavioural difficulties arising from impairments, learning difficulties and students with significant language impairments. A proportion of these students are seen as having high educational need. The current approach precludes targeted support for some students with significant educational needs that traditionally fall outside the rigid categories of disability. A number of consequences result:*

- *A growing concern for lack of supports for students with equivalent educational needs*
  - *A trend to labeling according to the criteria specified particularly for funding purposes*
  - *The arbitrary division between groups with similar teaching and learning needs.*
- The working party recommends that the Department of Education and Training identify budget provision to support schools differentially for students who traditionally fall outside this high needs group despite significant educational needs and thus ensure a renewed commitment exploring funding arrangements for up to 18% of the student population.
  - The working party recommends a renewed focus on targeted and non targeted funding to address the needs of all students across the range of special educational needs.

- The working party recommends that the Department explore methodologies for providing funding for all students who require teaching and learning adjustments by the extension of needs based profiling or the use of group/school data. That funds be provided for schools to support the 10 % of the student population with learning difficulties within this group.
- That an implementation strategy be developed to trial various models of support for student within this target group.
- That models developed are linked to a standards framework and be based on the principles of the Curriculum Framework and specifically the principles of learning ,teaching and assessment.
- That models of good practice should be provided to schools to assist in the development of documented educational plans to ensure the link between desired outcomes, educational planning and funding.

### **Services for students with high need**

- The working party recommends that in relation to the provision of services (visiting teacher) and supports (high cost equipment, minor works and assistive technology) that a centralized statewide service be maintained. The working party did not support the efficacy of use school funds in the purchase of services or high cost equipment.
- The working party recommends the provision of visiting teacher time (whether based at CIS, WAIDE or VIS or at service center or district level) be based on the profile of needs of students with high needs. The working party recommends work on formulas to maintain service levels across these services be developed.

### **Moderation of verification processes**

*The group did not resolve the issue how information from a student profile would be verified efficiently. A devolved process would be expected to provide better verification though at the cost of some consistency. A central office process provides for great consistency without an assessment of local verification. There is little evidence one way or the other as to whether a devolved process leads to better outcomes. It certainly carries the most risk in terms of cost overruns.*

*A compromise position seems to be preferred in other states. Several positions are assigned to the verified task (Queensland 10, NZ 28, etc) which ensures not all the burden falls on schools and yet provides some consistency between districts.*

- That provision be made within service structures for the establishment of district based positions to ensure moderation of the proposed funding initiative.
- That an implementation strategy be developed to trial a moderation process during 2004 to determine the impact on schools and the levels of accountability required by a devolved approach.

Chair: Peter Short  
Executive Officer: Richard Sanders  
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