



Family Advocacy Submission

**to the Standing Committee on Education
and Vocational Training**

Inquiry into Teacher Education

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Introduction

Family Advocacy is a state-wide advocacy agency which promotes and protects the rights, needs and interests of children and adults with developmental disability in New South Wales. Its mission is:

“to attain positive social roles for people with developmental disability through the development of advocacy by families and through strengthening the role, knowledge and influence of the family.”

The organisation has a priority to undertake advocacy on behalf of people with developmental disability who have very high support needs. It has been a leading voice in calling for the implementation of inclusive education including:

- ◆ supporting parents across NSW to gain inclusion for their sons and daughters through information, workshops and individual advocacy support;
- ◆ auspicing the *Kids Belong Together* campaign at the 1995 State election calling for a change of education policy;
- ◆ co-ordinating the *Action for McRae Report* coalition to provide a unified voice in negotiating educational reform;
- ◆ active involvement in the State Integration Reference Group including chair of the Training and Development Working Party and active membership of the Policy, Physical Access and Curriculum working parties.
- ◆ Active participation in the Vinson Inquiry into Public Education through submission, discussion with the Inquiry team and attendance at public meetings.
- ◆ coordinating the Coalition for Inclusive Education;
- ◆ member of the DET Low Support Needs Advisory Group;
- ◆ member of the Special Education Advisory Committee.

Overview of submission

This submission is premised on the assumption that all children should learn and grow together if we are ever to hope for a more inclusive society. In this context, the submission examines the nature of teacher education required to deliver “regular schools with an inclusive orientation which are the most effective means of combating discrimination, creating welcoming communities, building an inclusive society and achieving education for all”.¹

This submission provides background as to why an inclusive orientation to teacher education programs is required. Information about the common life experience of people with disability, together with the history of and assumptions underpinning the different forms of educational provision will be outlined.

¹ UNESCO, Salamanca Statement Article 2.

The submission will outline changes in patterns of enrolment of students with disability that have occurred over the past decade and discuss the implications for:

- the educational philosophy underpinning teacher training courses;
- the preparation of teachers; and
- the requirements for professional learning for teachers already in the workforce.

Summary of recommendations

Recommendation 1, Page 19

That teacher education programs adopt an inclusive philosophy to underpin the changes in content, approaches, structures and strategies required so that all children can be welcomed and educated in regular classes of local neighbourhood schools.

Recommendation 2, Page 21

That teacher education programs adopt the graduate teacher competencies developed by the Australian Association of Special Education (ASSE).

Recommendation 3, Page 22

That teacher education programs are reshaped to more effectively prepare teachers for schools of the future. This includes:

- adjustment to the assumptions that underpin teacher education in relation to:
 - class membership, recognising that all classes have members who are of mixed ability;
 - ways in which schools respond to pupils experiencing difficulties in learning;
- reshaping of the mandatory units in special education to ensure the development of an inclusive framework to provide competencies outlined above;
- reshaping of all pedagogical and subject courses to develop an integrated knowledge of a continuum of effective assessment, programming and teaching skills;
- the adoption of the graduate teacher competencies developed by AASE;
- the provision of knowledge and skills to teachers to be effective communicators, working as partners with parents, as part of an education team.

Recommendation 4, Page 23

That all education providers increase training and development for teachers and for full school communities so that they can effectively teach all students and build inclusive classes. Priority for training and development to be for high schools on the basis that they are currently less experienced at including all students.

Training and development should focus on:

- the recognition of the need to change teaching practice. Teachers must be assisted to understand:
 - the impact of personal values and beliefs on teaching; the nature of personal and professional change;
 - the nature of change in education;
 - barriers to change;
 - conditions for successful change;

- strategies that are useful to promote purposeful change;
- knowledge and skills to analyse existing classroom practice;
- knowledge and skills to work as a problem solver;
- core competencies for teaching mixed ability classes;
- working to develop and lead an inclusive school community.

The common life experience of people with disability and the importance of inclusion

The impact of impairment

People who have a disability, by definition, experience some degree of limitation to their physical and/or functional capacity, which can become life-shaping and even life defining, in its impact.

Although people who have a disability grow and develop across the course of their lives, this limitation is real, life long, and often has a major impact on the person's capacity to meet their own needs. Depending upon the degree to which the person's disability limits their competency, they will require additional supports from other people across the course of their lives in order for their needs and interests to be addressed, and sometimes even to ensure that they will live.

The impact of impairment means people with disability become more vulnerable to marginalisation, exclusion, neglect, exploitation and abuse.

The social situation facing people with disability

If we understand the social situation faced by people with disability, it helps us to understand the need for proactive steps, including inclusion in education, to protect their rights and safeguard them from the negative experience of people with disability in the past.

Because the person's difference has often been perceived negatively by many people within our society, people with a disability particularly have been subjected to social devaluation and discrimination, including:

- rejection, sometimes by families, neighbours, schools, community in general, and sometimes even by the educators whose very income derives from the person;
- isolation and segregation from people who do not have a disability and therefore from opportunities that come from being in contact with other people and the positive role expectations set by others;
- lack of opportunities for a person's development, growth and enriching life experiences, resulting in wasted lives;
- congregation with other people with disability and/or other devalued people, in circumstances where people may have nothing more in common than their shared rejection by other people, thereby setting very negative role expectations;
- loss of control and autonomy whereby every aspect of life may be externally controlled by other people and/or the service system upon which they rely;
- material poverty which exposes people to such things as poor or no health care, inferior housing, and/or homelessness, thereby leading to illness and shortened life expectancy;

- loss of recognition of, and few opportunities to develop, a sense of individuality and uniqueness;
- loss of relationships with the wide variety of people from whom identity and security is typically derived, like family and friends and other freely given relationships, thereby resulting in a lack of committed allies when things go wrong;
- physical and/or emotional neglect, damage or abuse from other people and the surrounding environment.

Effect of current social values especially in times of economic and social stress

Current social values suggest that a person's worth is measured according to intelligence, competency, productivity and economic wealth. These values are leading to a greater indifference to, and rejection of, marginalised populations. As a result, social and economic stress is posing a greater danger nowadays to vulnerable and powerless people. On this basis, educational inclusion for vulnerable people will be more, rather than less needed in the future.

Segregation and congregation in education

Provision in NSW

The history of education for students with disability in NSW parallels that of the USA and Canada. Prior to the 1950s, students with intellectual disability were considered to be uneducable and the state made no provision. Parents banded together to create special schools to prove to government and the community what they already knew; that of course all children and young people can learn.

In 1957, the Wyndham Report recommended the establishment of *special schools for special children*. Wyndham was not referring to the uneducable students for whom the state made no provision but rather students who “*should not be left in the ordinary class to impede the progress of more able children and to embarrass the class teacher*”.² Wyndham recommended the establishment of “*institutions for their care*”.

By 1974 there were 85 voluntary association schools for children with moderate and severe intellectual disability and it was not until the early 1980s that the State Government assumed responsibility for these schools.

Social and political context

Sobsey³ puts the history of segregated special education programs into its social and political context. He argues that segregated classrooms and schools developed for three reasons. Firstly, people perceived the needs of students with disability as being beyond what was currently available. Parent advocates feared questioning the segregated nature of provision fearing they would lose what they had gained. Secondly, the ‘special’ nature of special education suggested that unique training and resources would be required and administrative expedience suggested concentrating these at a few sites. Thirdly, the development of operant psychology had a significant influence on special education. It became associated with carefully controlled experimental design and the precise measurement of behaviour and thereby encouraged the creation of learning environments that were very different from existing classrooms. In order to apply the laboratory science of behaviourism to special education, it was necessary to model the special education classroom after the laboratory rather than the regular classroom. The highly controlled conditions that were considered to be necessary for teaching students with special needs were alien to and incompatible with regular classrooms.

“*The results have been catastrophic for students of special education programs*”⁴ including conditioned lack of initiative, docility and very poor generalisation of skills in real environments where the skills would have the potential to be functional. These deficits of strong instructional control and compliance led special educators to try to create artificial conditions within these segregated classrooms to make them resemble regular classrooms. “*The essential contradiction between imposed structure and natural learning opportunities seemed to elude all of us*.”⁵

² McRae, D., *The integration/inclusion feasibility study*, June, 1996, p38

³ Sobsey, D., *Integration outcomes: Theoretical models and empirical investigations*, Developmental Disability Bulletin, v21, n1, 1993

⁴ Sobsey, D., *op cit*, p5

⁵ Sobsey *op cit*, p5

The difficulties of generalisation also led to a secondary problem. If students removed from the mainstream of society because of deficits in their learning were ever to return to the mainstream, they would be required to learn more than the students without learning problems and they would be required to learn faster. Each transition to a new environment adds a new set of demands for the individual.

For example, a child moving from a segregated to an integrated classroom after 3 years of school must demonstrate the ability to work in groups that the other students in the regular class require. The students have learnt these skills gradually over 3 years of experience, but the student coming from the special class, who has not had those experiences, is expected to learn the same skills in a matter of days or weeks. Thus we are expecting the student with a disability to learn faster than non disabled schoolmates, and considering them to be failures if they cannot do so. It can be seen that the longer a child is in a special environment, the less likely it is that the child will be able to successfully return to the natural environment.

Assumptions underpinning segregated education

The special school was premised on the assumption that the differences between students were much greater than the commonalities and that efficiencies required the provision of 'special' education in a special place. Children were separated from the same aged peers of their community and congregated together with children of a wide age range, from a wide geographical area, the only commonality being a label of deficits.

As special schools began to recognise the need to make segregated settings resemble the regular class rather than a laboratory, the concept of support units took hold. A group of classes of students with disability was placed within the grounds of a regular school, usually in a specially constructed building at the edge of the playground and often fenced off from the rest of the school. This was supposed to overcome the problems of segregation. The students could share canteen and sporting facilities and if they behaved appropriately, could be 'integrated' for assembly, special days and sometimes art and library. As integration became popular, the Support Unit was perceived to have the additional advantage of proximity to regular classes for integration for appropriate subjects.

The Support Unit has remained a serious form of segregation and congregation of students with disability. Encapsulated as 'So near and yet so far', the devalued students are visible to the rest of the school community without any viable way to form real relationships. Integration into the regular class from Support Units remains at the invitation of the regular class teacher so many students spend years without 'being invited'. As full membership of their peer group at school is denied to them, their devalued status is confirmed.

Support classes: a buffer to enable the school to remain the same

Under the process of integration, students with disability who are able to 'fit in' to the regular class are permitted to do so. The philosophy is based on the belief that schools operate for a specified and highly normative band of students and those outside that band do not belong.

As Slee comments,

*"The problem for the school is one of working out how to fit different kids in with the minimum of disruption... The research imperative is the normalisation of difference by stabilising the newcomer in an environment that provides a buffer to enable schools to remain the same"*⁶

Support classes therefore become an important feature of the school system if the aim is to enable schools to stay the same. In other words, schools may remain impervious to changing needs of students and the changing conditions of the labour market through creating a residualised educational provision for different and difficult students.

Support classes are built on the assumptions that:

- the differences between students are much greater than their commonalities;
- the regular environment is not the natural environment for children who are different;
- children who are different must earn the privilege to be allowed to participate with their 'normative' peers but in reality they belong with other students who have a disability;
- many children are not worthy to learn with their 'normative' peers;
- children with disability need teachers with special education qualifications in order to learn;
- any question of adjustment must fall to the child who is different – their worthiness to participate is judged by the extent to which they can fit in the system as it stands.

The philosophy of supporting inclusive schools is in strong contradiction with the provision of support classes for devalued students.

Wolfensberger comments that:

*"... Very few people seem to realise that valued people are virtually never segregated. The only time that valued people are segregated is when they segregate themselves in order to increase their own status and value"*⁷

⁶ Slee, R. *Social justice and the changing directions in educational research: the case of inclusive education*, International Journal of Inclusive Education, v5, n 2-3, April-September, 2001, p173.

⁷ As reported in McRae, D., *The Integration/inclusion feasibility study, 1996*, p42

Purpose of support classes

Support classes have been developed for three purposes:

1. To meet the special needs of children with different learning needs

However:

- A support class is not a homogeneous group of learners. Every class has students of mixed ability and hence if all are to gain maximum benefit from education, the learning, even in a support class must be individualised.
- Support classes tend to have low expectations of students and this leads to low outcomes. The concentration on life skills rather than immersion in a rich and varied curriculum, and the requirement of mastery of a particular skill in order to go on to higher order skills, leads to a narrow and limited experience rather than the full range of age-appropriate experience available in the regular class. In consequence, students spend years on the balance beam rather than the soccer field, in speech therapy rather than drama, with early readers rather than listening to good literature via audio tapes.
- Support classes lack effective peer models. Verbal communication cannot be enhanced in a class filled with students with poor or no language.
- In support classes, many children spend long periods of 'marking time' while the special needs of everyone else are met.
- Support classes are often restricted to the discipline specialities of the support teachers. Hence students who are placed in these classes only have access to a restricted curriculum.

2. To provide a supported transition to the regular class

However:

- Students experience problems of generalisation. If students removed from the mainstream of society because of deficits in their learning are ever to return to the mainstream, they are required to learn more than the students without learning problems and are required to learn faster. Each transition to a new environment adds a new set of demands for the individual.

Thus we see that the most restrictive placements do not give students the opportunities to learn the skills necessary to learn in the least restrictive placements. The skills necessary to function in a world of people of mixed abilities cannot be taught in a segregated setting with only other students with disability.

- It creates the perception that students need a certain level of skill to be members of the regular class. The support class is part of a continuum model of education in which students with the highest support needs are congregated in the most restrictive placement and those with lesser support needs are deemed eligible for less restrictive options.

Where membership of the regular class is believed to be contingent on a certain level of skill, it is deceptive to argue that support class placement provides a transition path into the regular class. Many students will never have the requisite level of skill. These students will never be integrated into the regular class.

- The transition argument assumes that students can move easily from one placement to another, whereas in reality, parents are most actively discouraged by teachers, principals and often also by district office staff, from moving from a support class to the regular class.

3. To provide choice

However:

- Most children and young people who are eligible for special class or SSP placement are not offered the full range of choice. They are guided firmly to the restrictive option and little reliable information is provided about the regular class option.
- Wherever support classes and SSPs exist, children will be found to put in them to maintain staffing levels and the availability of 'options for others'.

Problems of support classes from the perspective of students with disability

The message sent to the school and community is one of not belonging

When children attend support classes and units, they attend a different school from their siblings and neighbours, usually needing to be bussed a significant distance from their communities. This separation from community sends the message to that community that this child is too different to belong. This child's 'special' needs outweigh their childhood status and we remove them from what they need most ... the friendship and support of relationships with neighbourhood children and siblings.

Support classes reinforce negative stereotypes

- Membership of a support class reinforces, rather than challenges, negative social stereotypes of people with disability. Some common stereotypes that are strengthened in a support class include that children and young people with disability are 'better with their own', are 'special and in need of protection', are 'not like us' and therefore not of equal value.
- It encourages students to be labelled by their difference and identified as one of a devalued group. This puts them at high risk of carrying all the historical (mostly unconscious) negative stereotypes about the group.
- It brings together children with disability beyond the natural proportions one would find in a school community. This has the dual effect of removing children from their own local community and grouping them in such numbers that the opportunity to develop relationships with children without disability is reduced.

Support classes lack the richness of experience that comes from the regular class

- Support class experience lacks coherence and comprehensiveness. It can never provide the richness of experience that comes from the diversity of a class made up of all children in the community.
- Support classes lack positive peer models. It is virtually impossible to encourage communication in a group of students in which few have good verbal skills and some may have alternative communication skills.
- Support classes reinforce low expectations and this leads to poor outcomes for students.

Support classes deny children the safeguard of peers without disability

In support classes, students with disability lack the safeguard of relationships with other students who do not have a disability. When things go wrong, as they inevitably do, students with disability may have no-one to tell or no-one to indicate that what has happened is not right or appropriate. Indeed, the absence of peers without disability means that there will be no-one to notice and no-one to alert others that things have gone wrong.

Support classes serve interests other than those of students with disability

These include the interests of:

- **Student's family:** In the current environment, membership of the regular class tends to require greater parent involvement. Once a student is enrolled in a support class or SSP, parents are not required to be involved in planning, funding, transport etc. Support class membership is easier for parents.
- **Teachers:** Where a support class exists, regular class teachers feel able to indicate that there is a 'better' place for a student with different learning needs. In addition, it helps to build an administrative hierarchy. Schools can take mistaken pride in their unit because they believe it indicates to the local community that they are inclusive.
- **Union or professional associations:** The congregation of children with special education needs maintains current industrial frameworks. The inclusion of students threatens existing structures.

In these competing interests, the individual child or young person is the least influential and their interests are often sacrificed to the interests of the others.

Inclusion

Lozman assists us to understand the difference between integration and inclusion.

*“... integration involves coming from the outside. Integration programs aim to ... help a child to fit into a pre existing model of schooling. Inclusion differs in that it assumes that children are a part of the regular school system from the start.”*⁸

In addition, inclusion focuses on reshaping existing systems to respond to all learners.

Wills and Jackson⁹ reflect that across the centuries of their existence, educational systems have mirrored the culture's struggle as it works through its biases. Inclusion has been central to addressing these.

The civil rights movement in the United States confirmed that 'separate but equal' was inherently discriminatory and that the forced segregation of students by colour reinforced devalued attitudes and second rate practices for a significant proportion of the population.

As western culture began to acknowledge and respect the diverse roles of women, education responded by abandoning some of its practices, for example, of streaming young girls away from math and sciences.

More recently as a society, Australia has begun to embrace people from different cultural backgrounds and indigenous people as an essential fabric of the nation. Education systems have responded by beginning to include aboriginal studies and multiculturalism in the educational milieu. Whilst we have a distance yet to go, the historical pattern is clear, we are a nation of diversity and therefore our education system must reflect this in its practices as well as in its teachings.

Children with disability are continuing to be disadvantaged by the vision of 'separate but equal' in educational provision. The recognition of the inherent inequality of separate provision leads us to seek to pull down the barriers that have prevented children with identified disability from learning together with their peers.

In 1994, UNESCO described inclusion as:

*“...a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children.”*¹⁰

Inclusive education is concerned with providing appropriate responses to the broader spectrum of learning needs. Here the difference between integration and inclusion is highlighted. Integration is a marginal theme addressing the way in which some learners can be integrated in the mainstream education. **Inclusive education, on the other hand, is an approach that looks into how to transform education systems in order to respond to the diversity of learners.** It aims to enable both teachers and learners to feel comfortable

⁸ Lozman, T., *Integration: Coming from the Outside*, Interaction, v13, n1, 1999, p21

⁹ Wills, D & Jackson, B., *Inclusion, much more than 'being there'* Interaction, v10, n2, 1996

¹⁰ UNESCO, *Overcoming exclusion through inclusive approaches in education: A Challenge and a Vision*, 2001

with diversity and to see it as a challenge and enrichment in the learning environment, rather than a problem.

Wills and Jackson describe inclusion as having three components:

1. Physical inclusion

Physical inclusion involves attending the local neighbourhood school, playing in the same playground, being in the same classrooms as well as having access to opportunities offered by the school at the same time as same aged peers without disability.

Physical presence is a pre-requisite for inclusion: clearly, if a child is not present, then he/she cannot be included. Unfortunately the landscape of our typical schools is such that even minor mobility or self-care issues can play havoc with just being there. For example, even though the *Disability Discrimination Act, 1992 (DDA)* came into effect in 1993, limited budgets for building modification means that issues of mobility and personal care can lead to exclusion from the local neighbourhood school.

2. Social Inclusion

Social inclusion involves policies and practices to promote a welcoming social environment for ALL students including promoting personal friendships, caring for one another, discouraging and addressing teasing and all other forms of social isolation of students.¹¹

One can be rejected and lonely even in a crowded classroom as many children will know. Recommending segregation to prevent this sort of rejection, however, is clearly illogical. Such a position fails to recognise that the social history of people with disability is profoundly one of being rejected and fails to recognise that the only long term adaptive response to this rejection is the nurturing of acceptance and welcoming by the next generation.

Both the 'place and pray' and the 'wrap in cotton wool' strategies loose touch with the complexity of human interaction. At this stage of educational inclusion, social inclusion requires a conscious set of policies and processes.

3. Curricular inclusion

Curricular inclusion is the involvement of the student in the regular curriculum of the school. Of all the aspects of inclusion, this is probably the hardest. It is increasingly being recognized that every child is special, with individual skills and needs and that this has to be addressed by the teacher. The child with the disability highlights this issue for all children.

Factors that promote curricular inclusion include:

- whole school policies and practices that promote high expectations for all learners;
- detailed knowledge of each student's skill in each subject;
- grouping practices that capture positive image, skill transfer and make extensive use of positive modelling;

¹¹ National Council on Intellectual Disability, *Education for all, UNESCO Report Card on inclusive education in Australia*, January, 2001. p15

- the sophisticated use of aide and specialist resources to create a seamless interface between specialist and regular class processes¹².

Why inclusion is important

It is generally agreed that the development of attitudes is an important part of education. It thus becomes critical that we declare which attitudes our society wishes to develop. This issue lies at the core of our discussion of inclusion of children with significant disability in the regular class of the local neighbourhood school because it is impossible to teach positive attitudes about people with disability if they are not an integral part of our daily childhood experiences.

The benefits of inclusion to the child with disability are well documented. In brief, the research demonstrates that inclusion provides more opportunities for a child's knowledge and skills to develop. It provides learning in real environments that enable students with disability to learn real content. In the regular class, everyone's expectations of the child are higher. There are more opportunities to learn and practice age-appropriate skills and to have typical age-appropriate experiences. Segregated and congregated arrangements by their very nature teach maladaptive behaviour. The child is caught into 'needing' special environments.

The inclusion of the child with disability in the regular class reduces the motivation of the parents and siblings to feel ashamed, to deny the person's existence or their relationship with the person. It helps to embed the child in the family and the family in their local community.

With proper modelling, interpretation and support, the inclusion of children with disability gentles their peers and some of the adults around them. Schooling is a strong socialising institution. Our first experiences with children with disability will powerfully shape our tolerance to difference, especially when these experiences are positively interpreted by parents and teachers.

There are educational benefits of inclusion way beyond benefits experienced by students with disability. Students without disability learn tolerance, respect and appreciation for people who are different. In a recent study by the Northcott Society¹³, children who had a child with disability in their class had more informed and more positive attitudes to students with disability than children who had no first hand experience.

In addition, education is much more than a range of academic competencies. Employers now and in the future are looking for employees with skills in working with people, they are looking for leaders and team players and the experience of learning together with students with a range of challenges provides a learning environment that is rich with opportunities to develop these competencies.

Inclusion and the misuse of language

"The absence of a language for inclusive education that stipulates its vocabulary and grammar increases the risk for political misappropriation. Traditional special educators demonstrate a

¹² National Council on Intellectual Disability, *op cit*, p16

¹³ unpublished report. For further information contact Sue Brown at Northcott Society.

remarkable resilience through linguistic dexterity. While they use a contemporary lexicon of inclusion, the cosmetic amendments to practices and procedures reflect assumptions about pathological defect and normality based upon a disposition of calibration and exclusion.”¹⁴

In NSW the misappropriation of language has gone even further. Inclusion has nothing to do with being a member of the regular class of the local neighbourhood school. In NSW, special schools and support units have been dressed up as inclusive when

“... each of these settings provide students with relevant educational programs and access to specialised support services in an inclusive school environment which demonstrates a readiness to accept diversity among its members. An inclusive school therefore, is measured by the degree to which each and every student in it is provided for and is successfully achieving, rather than by its type or category.”¹⁵

Inclusion is confused with effectiveness.

¹⁴ Slee, 2001, *op cit*, p167

¹⁵ NSW Department of Education and Training, *Learning Together: A discussion paper for school communities*, 1999.

Changed patterns of enrolment

Over the past decade, there have been significant shifts in the pattern of enrolment of students with special education needs as noted in the following 3 tables.

Table 1 – Enrolment of students with disabilities in support classes, SSPs and in integrated settings, PRIMARY.

Year	Students in support classes and SSPs	Students in government schools receiving special education support in integrated settings	TOTAL
1996/7	7,603	3,380	10,983
1997/8	7,341	4,106	11,447
1998/9	7,131	7,905	15,036
1999/00	7,096	8,313	15,409
2000/01	7,000	10,773	17,773
2001/02	6,600	11,060	17,660
2002/3	6,520	13,123	19,643
2003/4	7,418	14,661	22,079

Source: NSW State Budget Papers

Table 2 – Enrolment of students with disabilities in support classes, SSPs and in integrated settings, SECONDARY

Year	Students in support classes and SSPs	Students in government schools receiving special education support in integrated settings	TOTAL
1996/7	6,155	596	6,751
1997/8	6289	1,027	7,316
1998/9	8,265	3,995	12,260
1999/00	8,274	4,267	12,541
2000/01	8,804	4,077	12,881
2001/02	8,580	4,098	12,678
2002/3	8,630	5,624	14,254
2003/4	9,634	8,154	17,788

Source: NSW State Budget Papers

Table 3 – Enrolment of students with disabilities in support classes, SSPs and in integrated settings, TOTAL PRIMARY AND SECONDARY

Year	Students in support classes and SSPs	Students in government schools receiving special education support in integrated settings	TOTAL
1988	13,353	1,135	14,488
1990	14,060	1,983	16,043
1992	14,092	3,335	17,427
1994	14,500	4,478	18,978
1996	13,758	3,976	17,734
1997	13,630	5,133	18,763
1998	15,396	11,900	27,296
1999	15,370	12,580	27,950
2000/01	15,804	14,850	30,654
2001/02	15,180	15,158	30,338
2002/3	15,150	18,747	33,897
2003/04	17,052	22,815	39,867

Source: NSW State Budget Papers & D. McRae, *The Integration/Inclusion Feasibility Study*, Department of Education & Training, June, 1996, p23

These tables indicate two major developments.

Firstly, there is a significant increase in the number of students with special education needs who are integrated into the regular class.

Secondly, there has been 175% in the number of identified students with special education needs in the past 15 years. The substantial increase in the numbers in the regular class has NOT been matched by a corresponding decrease in the proportion of students in support classes and SSPs. This demonstrates that the increase is a result of a process of increased identification and labelling of special education needs in students who were already members of the regular class. These tend to be students with mild disabilities who in the past did not receive any funded support.

Changed enrolment patterns have a most significant impact on what is required of teacher education and ongoing professional development of teachers.

Term of Reference 5:

Examine the educational philosophy underpinning teacher training courses

A fundamental implication of inclusive education is the recognition of the diversity of children and young people who are members of the regular class. It is critical that this diversity is embraced in the philosophy of teacher education to support the fundamental re-conceptualisation that is required.

A philosophy of inclusion has fundamental implications for teacher education courses.

“It involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular system to educate all children.”¹⁶

Inclusive education is an approach that sees all children welcomed and educated in regular classes of local neighbourhood schools. It looks at how to transform education systems in order to respond to the diversity of learners. Inclusive education aims to enable both teachers and learners to feel comfortable with diversity and to see it as a challenge and enrichment in the learning environment, rather than a problem.

Recommendation 1

That teacher education programs adopt an inclusive philosophy to underpin the changes in content, approaches, structures and strategies required so that all children can be welcomed and educated in regular classes of local neighbourhood schools.

¹⁶ UNESCO, *Overcoming exclusion through inclusive approaches in education: A Challenge and a Vision*, 2001

Term of Reference 7 (vi)

Examine the preparation of primary and secondary teaching graduates to deal with children with special needs and/or disabilities

The preparation of primary and secondary teachers must take account of a change in expectation of the learning capacity of students with disability. Inclusion is no longer perceived to be limited to social goals for students. There is an expectation that all students can learn and that all students have a right to access and participation in the regular curriculum (with or without modification).

Teachers and school communities must possess the knowledge and skills to enable students of differing abilities to meet their educational goals within the context of the full curriculum.

What is a good teacher?

A good teacher is one who supports the physical, social and curricular inclusion of all students. A good teacher:

- has high expectations for all learners;
- groups students so that there are positive role models for skill development, positive image and self-esteem;
- can adjust curriculum;
- uses quality instruction built on evidenced-based principles including focus on individual need, carefully planned, intensive and goal directed;
- can integrate aide and specialist resources to support effective learning in an inclusive class;
- creates a positive social environment that values caring for one another, discourages and addresses teasing and all forms of social isolation of students.

What are the competencies required of the ‘good’ graduate teacher

Family Advocacy supports the teacher competencies developed by the Australian Association of Special Education (ASSE) as the foundation to enable a graduate teacher to teach children with special education needs in their class. These include:

Awareness of issues in special education: Teachers will be aware of historical and philosophical developments in program development, delivery of instruction and current policy and practices.

Assessment and evaluation: In collaboration with a special educator, teachers will be able to develop, administer and evaluate curriculum-based measures to plan individual programs, monitor student progress and evaluate instruction.

Curriculum and program design: In collaboration with a special educator, teachers will be able to adapt curriculum objectives and design an individualised education program that meets the identified needs of the student.

Instruction: Teachers will be able to plan and utilise effective instructional strategies to assist students achieve instructional objectives.

Classroom and behaviour management: Teachers will implement practices that result in maximum teaching time, high rates of task engagement, decrease disruptive behaviour and promote positive teacher/ student interaction.

Environmental adaptation: In collaboration with special educators and other personnel, teachers will be able to recommend and implement modifications to the classroom and school environment that assist students meet classroom and individual objectives and access the full range of school facilities.

Research based practice: Teachers will be able to critically evaluate and be able to justify their selection of instructional strategies in the light of empirical evidence provided by research.

Practicum and post graduate development: Teachers must learn to apply more general principles to specific situations. Coaching and mentoring have been shown to be most effective in assisting classroom teachers to use research based techniques. Such practical experience should be gained by working with trained and competent special educators.

In addition, Family Advocacy believes that teachers must have competence in working as part of a team, in partnership with parents, in communication and negotiation skills.

Recommendation 2

That teacher education programs adopt the graduate teacher competencies developed by the Australian Association of Special Education (ASSE).

Pre-service teacher education: the mandatory unit in special education

Whilst the disability community applauded the decision to include a mandatory unit in special education in all undergraduate teacher education, the quality of the courses offered is extremely variable. Many courses spend significant time on non-educational issues of medical aetiology underpinning a deficit model and provide little or no preparation for teaching mixed ability classes.

Many courses continue to operate from an ‘individual pupil’ view that places the blame for educational failure on the student and deals with the failure by removal. The ‘individual pupil’ view is based on the assumption that a group of children can be identified as ‘special’; these ‘special’ children need ‘special’ teaching in response to their problem; it is best to teach children with similar problems together and therefore all ‘special’ children are grouped together and are schooled somewhere else with the remaining ‘normal’ children benefiting from existing forms of schooling.

Effective schooling, on the other hand, seeks to understand children’s difficulties as they participate in school through a curriculum approach. This view enables schools to cater for a

wider range of pupils, including students who are traditionally excluded from the regular class. The approach assumes that any child may experience difficulties in schooling and that such difficulties can point to ways in which teaching can be improved. These improvements in teaching will lead to better learning conditions for all pupils. The curriculum approach recognises that support must be available as teachers attempt to develop their practice.

In 2004, it can be argued that affirmative action strategies continue to be required to support inclusive practice for students with additional needs. Family Advocacy supports the view that a mandatory unit continues to be necessary for the immediate future¹⁷, but that significant reorganisation of teacher education programs is required to develop an inclusive approach in all pedagogy.

Recommendation 3

That teacher education programs are reshaped to more effectively prepare teachers for schools of the future. This includes:

- adjustment to the assumptions that underpin teacher education in relation to:
 - class membership, recognising that all classes have members who are of mixed ability;
 - ways in which schools respond to pupils experiencing difficulties in learning;
- reshaping of the mandatory units in special education to ensure the development of an inclusive framework to provide competencies outlined above;
- reshaping of all pedagogical and subject courses to develop an integrated knowledge of a continuum of effective assessment, programming and teaching skills;
- the adoption of the graduate teacher competencies developed by AASE;
- the provision of knowledge and skills to teachers to be effective communicators, working as partners with parents, as part of an education team.

¹⁷ It is pleasing to note that DET has prepared a brief for Mandatory Pre-Service Teacher Education Studies that would provide a sound foundation for inclusive practice. To our knowledge, it has not yet being implemented in any teacher education courses.

Term of Reference 10

Examine the construction, delivery and resourcing of ongoing professional learning for teachers already in the workforce

Recommendation 4

That all education providers increase training and development for teachers and for full school communities so that they can effectively teach all students and build inclusive classes. Priority for training and development to be for high schools on the basis that they are currently less experienced at including all students.

Training and development should focus on:

- the recognition of the need to change teaching practice. Teachers must be assisted to understand:
 - the impact of personal values and beliefs on teaching; the nature of personal and professional change;
 - the nature of change in education;
 - barriers to change;
 - conditions for successful change;
 - strategies that are useful to promote purposeful change;
- knowledge and skills to analyse existing classroom practice;
- knowledge and skills to work as a problem solver;
- core competencies for teaching mixed ability classes;
- working to develop and lead an inclusive school community.