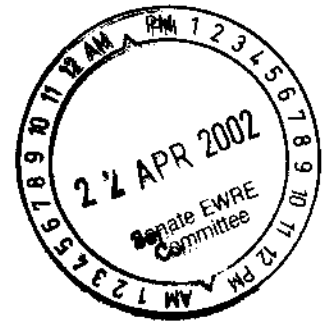




Education Support Principals' Association Inc.



Please address all correspondence to:
Castlereagh School
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Willetton
Western Australia 6155

16th April 2002

Mr John Carter
Committee Secretary
Inquiry into the Education of Students with Disabilities
Employment Workplace Relations and Education
Suite 1.61
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir,

I am enclosing a submission that my association, The Western Australian Education Support Principals and Administrators Association (Inc), submitted to a review of services for students with disabilities in Western Australia.

Having read the terms of reference of your review, we believe that the issues we have addressed are also relevant at the Federal level. However, there are three topics upon which we would like to comment.

FUNDING

The Association believes that funding for the education of students with disabilities to the State should be open and transparent. There should be a clear trail of where money comes into State funds and how it is expended. The reason being that maybe not all funds address the needs of students for whom they are designated.

THERAPY

Therapy is core educational business for the majority of students with disabilities. Without significant input in this area, the educational programs would not meet the individual needs of students. This point is also made in our submission, but it is of such importance to us we believe that we should give it further emphasis. Therefore, we would recommend that Federal Education Grants to States are bolstered by the inclusion of funds to be spent on the therapy needs of the students.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In 1995 National Professional Development Funding (NPDP) was made available to individual groups to apply for funds if their projects met pre-

determined standards. With the present trend towards inclusion, it is necessary to now provide for the funding in order that teaching staff and administrators are brought up to date with the current developments, in order that they can meet the needs of the students with disabilities. Certainly a Federal initiative in this area would be well received.

I would be happy to discuss any of these issues with you, should you consider it necessary.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roger Smailes". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'R'.

ROGER SMAILES
President



**THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION SUPPORT
PRINCIPALS AND ADMINISTRATORS ASSOCIATION (INC)**

SUBMISSION TO THE

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

REVIEW OF EDUCATION SERVICES

FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

IN GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS

September 2001

INTRODUCTION

The Western Australian Education Support Principals and Administrators Association of WA (Inc) (henceforth referred to as the Association) is a broad-based independent group of Principals and Administrators from Education Support Schools and Centres, Language Development Centres and other specialist services. The Association advocates for students with disabilities and is an effective lobby for inclusive curriculum development for students from Kindergarten to Year 12, which is the broadest age range covered by any category of government school. The Association also provides professional development in the field of Special Education and advocates for services and funding for students with disabilities.

This opportunity to examine the provision of education services for students with disabilities is welcomed by the Association, as the Association believes that Education Support facilities and programs are true 'centres of excellence' in the government education community.

Models Of Service Delivery

Various models for the delivery of education services for students with disabilities have developed and changed over time. The current continuum of services includes:

1. Education Support Schools serving kindergarten, pre-primary, primary, secondary and/or upper secondary students;
2. Education Support Centres serving primary, secondary and/or upper secondary students;
3. Education Support Units in primary, secondary or district high schools managed by the primary, secondary or district high schools;
4. Satellite classes in primary and secondary schools managed by Education Support Schools;
5. The Inclusion Project currently serving primary and secondary students;
6. Students with intellectual disabilities enrolled in their local schools outside of the Inclusion Project auspices. These students may or may not receive any Education Support services;
7. Students with physical disabilities and sensory impairments enrolled in their local schools;
8. Language Development Centres serving pre-primary, lower and middle primary students, previously without intellectual handicaps, but this has changed recently;
9. Satellite classes in primary schools managed by Language Development Centres;
10. Specialist programs for students with hearing and/or vision impairments;
11. Specialist programs for students with behavioural problems;
12. The Centre for Inclusive Schooling, including the Visiting Teacher Service; and
13. Outreach programs for students unable to attend school for medical reasons.

The remainder of this submission is concerned with the provision of education services for students with intellectual disabilities in the first six categories listed above: Education Support Schools, Centres and Units, satellite classes managed by Education Support Schools and students with intellectual disabilities attending their local school, whether under the auspices of the Inclusion Project or not.

This submission will centre around key areas related to education services for students with disabilities and will make a series of recommendations under the following terms of reference for the review:

1. Facilitate Appropriate Learning Outcomes for Students with Disabilities;
2. Reflect the Intent of the School Education Act (1999);
3. Provide Equitable Access for Students with Disabilities;
4. Comply with Other Legislative and Administrative Requirements; and
5. Best Practice.

FACILITATE APPROPRIATE LEARNING OUTCOMES FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

1. Representation of the Education Support Perspective on the Department of Education Working Parties, Reviews, Task Forces and Other Initiatives

In the past, there has been a lack of representation of Education Support expertise on various Department of Education working parties, curriculum development task forces, etc. At other times, representation is secured after the Association hears of a review or new initiative and asks to be represented. This lack of representation for various Department of Education initiatives seems contrary to the principle of inclusivity and to the achievement of appropriate learning outcomes for students with disabilities.

1.1 ESPA Recommendation:

The Department of Education will ensure that a representative with current school-based Education Support expertise will be appointed or invited to all curriculum task forces, working parties, review groups, development groups, etc. to ensure that Department of Education initiatives are inclusive and that appropriate learning outcomes for students with disabilities are secured.

2. Curriculum

For many years, curriculum in Education Support facilities was developed on a site-by-site basis, drawing on international Special Education curriculum materials, adaptations of Department of Education curriculum materials for nondisabled students and teachers' ingenuity. Indeed, Education Support facilities and teachers showed great leadership in curriculum development, being the only sector in Western Australian government education that had to develop its own curriculum materials. In addition, Education Support embraced an outcomes approach long before this perspective became a systemic focus, with teachers programming in terms of long-term and short-term measurable, quantifiable objectives or goals.

Significant lobbying by the Association resulted in the establishment of a Working Party of Education Support and therapy staff to write the Department of Education Foundation Outcome Statements and to lobby for the publication of these outcomes as part of the larger Student Outcome Statements package. The Education Support sector, well before the publication of the Shean Report in 1993, had begun the implementation of Individual Education Plans in order to be accountable for the outcomes achieved by their students.

For years, the Education Support sector has taken a leadership role in the development of curriculum relevant to students with intellectual disabilities and the use of Individual Education Plans to be accountable for student achievement. However, there is no advocate for students with disabilities, with specialist knowledge and school-based experience in Education Support, on the Curriculum Council.

2.1 ESPA Recommendation:

The Department of Education will lobby the Curriculum Council to seek a Council member from the Education Support sector.

3. Early Intervention Programs

With the change to the starting age for kindergarten and preschool students in Western Australian government schools, one group of students has been severely disadvantaged. Research indicates that students with intellectual disabilities benefit enormously from early intervention programs.

Education Support Schools and Centres can offer teacher expertise and specialist pedagogy to very young children with intellectual disabilities. Some sites also have therapy services and resources such as hydrotherapy pools, specialised gym equipment, etc. Education Support Schools and Centres also have the facilities and staff orientation to teach early self-care skills such as toileting, feeding and dressing skills. If young students with intellectual disabilities can access these educational opportunities and environments, many may be able to attend their local schools in Year 1 and beyond.

3.1 ESPA Recommendation:

Education Support Schools and Centres that choose to offer early intervention programs for students with intellectual disabilities will be funded. The student intake for funded early intervention programs will be continuous over the school year, with students commencing on or after their third birthday.

4. The Education Support Principalship

The Education Support Principalship provides a base for best practice and the delivery of services. The status of Principal ensures that the facility, staff and students receive appropriate resourcing. In turn, the Principal is accountable for the use of all fiscal and human resources allocated for a given group of students. The Principalship ensures accountability, advocacy and safe guards at the systemic level and the dissemination of highly specialised pedagogy for students with disabilities. Indeed, the Principalship of Education Support Schools and Centres has ensured that these facilities are true 'centres of excellence'.

Since the inception of the Education Support Centre model in 1985, there have been repeated suggestions to diminish the status of the Principal of Education Support Centres to the status of Deputy or Head of Department. And yet it has been the Education Support Centre Principalship that has provided strong accountability for student outcomes and resource expenditure, educational leadership for specialist pedagogy and diverse, contemporary curriculum and advocacy for integration programs and the principle of inclusivity. In addition, parents of students with disabilities value the service provided by Education Support Centres, as indicated in a compilation of parent surveys from across the state (see Appendix 1, pages 17-21).

4.1 ESPA Recommendation:

The position of Principal will be retained for all Education Support Schools and Education Support Centres, with Principals recognised as valued advocates for the educational needs and rights of students with disabilities.

5. Therapy Services

Occupational, Speech and Physical therapy services are valued components of the educational program for students with disabilities. Therapists providing services to students in government schools must be committed to the ethos of the Department of Education. However, the current state of therapy provision for students with disabilities is problematic.

There is a fragmentation of service provision because there are several providers of school age therapy services and, at times, a seemingly minimal commitment to the Department of Education's ethos beyond those therapists employed directly by the Department of Education to work in Language Development Centres.

Most therapists are employed by agencies other than the Department of Education. These staff do not have a line manager in the Schools and Centres they are funded by, where they work and where they are based. It is difficult for 'visiting' staff to feel a part of a school. At some sites, it appears that therapists don't feel welcomed as part of the school staff, rarely coming into the staffroom or attending staff functions, which can result in alienation rather than collaboration. At other sites, it appears that therapists don't view themselves as a part of the school community, not attending staff meetings, taking annual leave during term time and being unavailable for meetings with teachers at times when school staff are available.

Education Support Schools and Centres receive varying amounts of therapy services that may or may not reflect real differences in populations and needs. Country students with disabilities and needing therapy services receive significantly less direct therapy than their metropolitan peers.

The caseload of many therapists appears to be completely unrealistic, resulting in very thin services to the target population. Currently, therapy staff are based at a few Education Support Schools in the metropolitan area. Valuable time is spent travelling to other sites in order to deliver outreach services.

5.1 ESPA Recommendation:

The Department of Education Department will directly employ and allocate therapy staff to Education Support Schools and Centres where they will be based. Some therapists will work directly with students at a given site, while others will provide services for students at nearby sites, using an outreach model.

5.2 ESPA Recommendation:

The Principal of an Education Support School or Centre will be the direct line manager for the therapists and therapy assistants based at the School or Centre. The Department of Education will employ senior therapists to provide professional support and guidance to the therapists employed by the Department.

5.3 ESPA Recommendation:

The Education Support Schools and Centres with therapy staff will support the development of a Therapy Network for the collegiate support of the therapists and will encourage therapists to become a high-profile, clearly identifiable, self-managing group within the Department of Education, as are School Psychologists, Social Workers and Aboriginal and Islander Education Workers.

5.4 ESPA Recommendation:

The Department Of Education will complete a survey of therapy needs for students with disabilities and actively seek to employ an adequate number of therapists to provide a meaningful level of service to the target population.

REFLECT THE INTENT OF THE SCHOOL EDUCATION ACT (1999)

6. Policy

The provision of education services for students with disabilities has been guided by the Department of Education's Policy and Guidelines for the Education of Students with Disabilities, which was published in 1993. Changes in educational thinking and the new School Education Act (1999) point to the need for a new policy for the provision of education services for students with disabilities, to enable schools to comply with the School Education Act (1999).

6.1 ESPA Recommendation:

The Department of Education will develop a new policy for the provision of education services for students with disabilities. The policy will provide operational definitions of the six disabilities named in the School Education Act (1999) and will reflect current changes in educational thinking. In addition, the policy will provide clear guidelines for potentially contentious issues such as the placement of students with intellectual disabilities.

7. Placement

Under the School Education Act (1999), every student is eligible to attend his/her local school. Students with intellectual disabilities eligible for Education Support per capita School Grant funding and for Education Support services are eligible to attend their local schools or Education Support facilities.

The categorical description of students as 'Unit', 'Centre' or 'School' students, and the placement of students with intellectual disabilities on the basis of IQ scores alone, are out of line with best practice and current educational thinking.

In some cases, parents receive balanced information about the choice of schools for their child, while at other times it appears that parents have been given a particular point of view from various service providers, including the Disability Services Commission, District-based school psychologists and Principals of other schools. Informed parental choice and consideration of the 'whole' student must be seen as key principles in determining placement.

7.1 ESPA Recommendation:

Students with intellectual disabilities will be eligible for Education Support per capita School Grant funding, not for enrolment in a particular category of school. Seamless eligibility for Education Support per capita School Grant funding means students with intellectual disabilities will be able to attend different appropriate facilities at various stages of their education, in order to meet their changing educational needs.

7.2 ESPA Recommendation:

The new Department of Education policy for the provision of education services to students with disabilities (ESPA Recommendation 6.1) will stipulate that placement will be based on a holistic view of the student with an intellectual disability, not just an IQ score and that Education Support facilities are well equipped to meet the educational needs of a diverse range of students. District Offices will be monitored for their compliance with these principles.

7.3 ESPA Recommendation:

A student's parents and the Principals of schools the student may attend (eg his/her local school and the nearest appropriate gazetted Education Support facility) will negotiate placement according to the new Department of Education policy for the provision of education services to students with disabilities (ESPA Recommendation 6.1) and the School Education Act (1999).

7.4 ESPA Recommendation:

Unresolved placement issues will be directed to District Office; further unresolved issues will be passed to Central Office for management according to the School Education Act (1999).

7.5 ESPA Recommendation:

An interagency committee will be established, with representatives from the Department of Education, Family and Children's Services, Disability Services Commission, Therapy Focus, etc. to ensure that each government agency is working with the others to improve outcomes for students with disabilities and to promote each other's services.

PROVIDE EQUITABLE ACCESS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

8. School Grant Funding

The continuum of services is one of the strengths of the current provision of Education Support services to students with intellectual disabilities. A continuum of services ensures that a variety of student needs can be addressed and parents and carers are given real choices, at least in the metropolitan area.

However, the current continuum of service delivery contains anomalies in the allocation of the Education Support per capita School Grant funding for students with intellectual disabilities; these inequalities need to be addressed. Education Support Schools and Centres receive per capita School Grant funding for each enrolled student with an intellectual disability. Other schools attract funding under the Inclusion Project; some schools receive no Education Support per capita School Grant funding for their students with intellectual disabilities. The principles of inclusivity and the provision of equitable access for students with disabilities require the equitable application of the Education Support per capita School Grant funding for enrolled students with intellectual disabilities.

8.1 ESPA Recommendation:

A student with an intellectual disability will attract the same Education Support per capita School Grant funding for students with intellectual disabilities, irrespective of the school he/she attends.

8.2 ESPA Recommendation:

The Education Support per capita School Grant funding for students with intellectual disabilities will not be less than the current Education Support per capita School Grant funding allocated for students enrolled in Education Support Schools and Centres. The current amount of Education Support per capita School Grant funding for students with intellectual disabilities will not be spread more thinly to cover those students with intellectual disabilities who currently are not funded. The total amount of Education Support per capita School Grant funding to be allocated to schools for enrolled students with intellectual disabilities will be increased to cover those students who currently are not funded.

8.3 ESPA Recommendation:

In the future, the amount of Education Support per capita School Grant funding for students with intellectual disabilities will reflect current student numbers and will not remain a fixed amount to be stretched further as student numbers increase over time.

8.4 ESPA Recommendation:

In some instances, additional minor and/or capital works funding may be needed to guarantee a student's physical needs are catered for (eg to build a ramp or specialised toilet for the first student with a physical disability enrolled at a given school). The existing funding for physical modifications to school buildings will continue to be retained centrally.

9. Human Resources - Teachers

The current Teacher staffing formula contains a variety of anomalies that are not in line with the principles of inclusivity and the provision of equitable access for students with disabilities. The formula uses an IQ-driven weighting system for students with intellectual disabilities and acknowledges the presence of severe physical disabilities. The formula does not acknowledge the presence of the severe emotional and behavioural needs of those students considered to have a mild/moderate disability on the basis of IQ alone. In addition, the weighting system is not applied to students with intellectual disabilities in mainstream settings.

The current Teacher staffing formula uses different multipliers for different year levels: Years K, P, 1-3, 4-7, 8-10 and 11-12. The changing multipliers are designed to reflect the varying curricular needs of the students as well as the differing Non-Contact Time entitlements of teachers working with different year levels. When the current Teacher staffing formula was developed, secondary students with intellectual disabilities were allocated a smaller multiplier than their nondisabled peers. The argument given for this non-inclusive practice was that the students with disabilities had already received generous weightings on the basis of their intellectual disability. This argument sidestepped the issue that the disability weightings were linked to needs arising from intellectual disability and year level multipliers were linked to needs arising from curriculum and Non-Contact Time entitlements, two separate sets of needs. The secondary student with a disability is treated as if he/she has fewer curriculum needs to prepare for adult life and the secondary Education Support Teacher is not entitled to the same Non-Contact Time as his/her peers working with non-disabled students.

The principles of inclusivity and the provision of equitable access for students with disabilities require the equitable application of Teacher resources.

9.1 ESPA Recommendation:

The Teacher staffing formula weightings for intellectual disability will be redefined to encompass factors such as the presence of severe emotional and behavioural needs, as well as measured IQ and the presence of a severe physical disability.

9.2 ESPA Recommendation:

The Department of Education will apply the Teacher staffing formula weightings for intellectual disability across all settings. A student with an intellectual disability will attract the same Teacher allocation, irrespective of the school he/she attends.

9.3 ESPA Recommendation:

The Teacher staffing formula weightings for all students with intellectual disabilities will not be less than the current weightings allocated for students with intellectual disabilities enrolled in Education Support Schools and Centres. The current Teacher FTE allocated for students with intellectual disabilities will not be spread more thinly to cover those students with intellectual disabilities who currently are not weighted in the Teacher staffing formula. Rather, the total Teacher staffing pool to be allocated for students with intellectual disabilities will be increased to cover those students with intellectual disabilities who currently are not weighted.

9.4 ESPA Recommendation:

The current Teacher staffing formula will be changed in order to make the lower and upper secondary multipliers the same for students with and without intellectual disabilities. This change will acknowledge that the curriculum needs of secondary students with intellectual disabilities are as worthy as those of secondary students without intellectual disabilities. In addition, the teaching responsibilities of secondary teachers in all Education Support facilities will be recognised by an entitlement to Non-Contact Time on a par with their colleagues in other settings.

9.5 ESPA Recommendation:

In the future, the Teacher staffing pool for students with intellectual disabilities will reflect current student numbers and levels of need and will not remain a fixed amount of FTE to be stretched further as student numbers and need increase over time.

9.6 ESPA Recommendation:

Any future changes to the current Teacher staffing formula will not result in decreased levels of Teacher allocation for students with intellectual disabilities in comparison to current levels of Teacher staffing in Education Support Schools and Centres.

10. Human Resources – Education Assistants

The current Education Assistant staffing formula has some benefits in comparison to the current Teacher staffing formula. The Education Assistant staffing formula measures student need across four areas: Self-care, Mobility, Behaviour and Safety and Curriculum Access. This formula is responsive to the ambulant, toilet-trained student with a mild intellectual disability, who also is aggressive towards staff and students and can access the curriculum only in a one-to-one teaching situation. However, the Education Assistant staffing formula is not applied to students with intellectual disabilities outside of Education Support Schools and Centres, resulting in the inequitable distribution of human resources. Finally, the current proposal to create a single staffing formula for all non-teaching personnel in schools risks the loss of the best features of the existing Education Assistant staffing formula.

10.1 ESPA Recommendation:

The Department of Education will apply the Education Assistant staffing formula across all settings. A student with an intellectual disability will attract the same Education Assistant allocation, irrespective of the school he/she attends.

10.2 ESPA Recommendation:

The Education Assistant allocations for students with intellectual disabilities will not be less than the current level of allocations for students with intellectual disabilities enrolled in Education Support Schools and Centres. The current Education Assistant FTE allocated for students with intellectual disabilities will not be spread more thinly to cover those students with intellectual disabilities who currently are not funded by the Education Assistant staffing formula. Rather, the total Education Assistant staffing pool to be allocated to schools for students with intellectual disabilities will be increased to cover those students who currently are not funded.

10.3 ESPA Recommendation:

In the future, the Education Assistant staffing pool for students with intellectual disabilities will reflect current student numbers and levels of need and will not remain a fixed amount of FTE to be stretched further as student numbers and need increase over time.

10.4 ESPA Recommendation:

Any future changes to the current Education Assistant staffing formula will not result in decreased levels of Education Assistant allocations for students with intellectual disabilities in comparison to current levels of Education Assistant staffing in Education Support Schools and Centres.

10.5 ESPA Recommendation:

In some instances, additional Education Assistant staffing may be needed to guarantee a student's educational and/or physical needs are catered for. The existing funding for additional, extraordinary Education Assistant staffing allocations will continue to be retained centrally.

11. Human Resources – Registrar and School Officer

The current Registrar and School Officer staffing formula is linked loosely to the classification level of the school, which in turn is linked loosely to student numbers. Allocation of Registrar and School Officer staffing on the basis of student numbers alone does not reflect the complexity or the potential administrative workload at a site.

The classification levels of Education Support facilities is problematic, as student numbers have fluctuated over time at some sites. In addition, some facilities have secured additional School Officer FTE in response to increased therapy staff on site. Anomalies have occurred in the past and a more consistent formula that reflects the principles of inclusivity and the provision of equitable access for students with disabilities is needed. The Association is aware that a review of nonteaching staffing formulae is underway at this time.

11.1 ESPA Recommendation:

The Department of Education will develop a staffing formula for Registrars and School Officers based on the total Teaching and Nonteaching FTE (eg Education Assistants, Laboratory Technicians, Aboriginal and Islander Education Workers, etc.) and the total FTE from other agencies (eg nurses, therapists, etc.) at a given site. The total FTE of Department of Education staff and staff from other agencies is the best reflection of student needs and the complexity and potential administrative workload of the site.

11.2 ESPA Recommendation:

The new Registrar and School Officer staffing formula will be applied to all government schools irrespective of whether one, ten or fifty students with intellectual disabilities are enrolled in the school. A student with an intellectual disability will attract the same amount of Teacher and Education Assistant staffing (ESPA Recommendations 8.1 and 9.1), irrespective of the school he/she attends. Thus, any increased staffing due to the enrolment of a student with a disability will be reflected in that site's total staff FTE, thus addressing the principles of inclusivity and the provision of equitable access for students with disabilities.

11.3 ESPA Recommendation:

The new Registrar and School Officer staffing formula will provide a base of 1.0 FTE Registrar at all government schools, irrespective of the number of staff or students at the school. This base allocation is necessary in light of the increased devolution of administrative duties to schools.

12. Local Area Education Planning for Education Support

In 1997-1998, the Department of Education initiated a Local Area Education Planning process in relation to Education Support facilities. A large number of recommendations were made both at the district level and the systemic level. However, little appears to be happening in relation to the Education Support LAEP process.

12.1 ESPA Recommendation:

The Department of Education will reactivate the LAEP process for Education Support facilities by making the LAEP recommendations and the timeline for implementation of those recommendations public.

12.2 ESPA Recommendation:

One priority of the Education Support LAEP process will be the relocation of existing Education Support Schools to campuses shared with both a primary and secondary school where possible, or to a site with at least one other non-Education Support school. The final goal is to have all Education Support Schools on shared campuses, which is in line with the principles of inclusivity and the provision of equitable access for students with disabilities.

12.3 ESPA Recommendation:

The Education Support per capita School Grant funding, Teacher allocation and Education Assistant allocation for one or more students with disabilities will be given to the enrolling school to manage. The students, not an 'Education Support Unit' label, will be the basis of Education Support per capita School Grant funding and Teacher and Education Assistant allocations. The school may choose to mainstream these students and to support them in different ways using their allocated resources. Alternatively, the school may choose to group these students for part of the school day or week, in order to meet their educational needs. The decision to create such groups, previously designated as Education Support Units, will rest with the school and not District Office. These groups will not be labelled as Education Support Units, as this label is contrary to current trends towards inclusivity.

12.4 ESPA Recommendation:

The Department of Education will put into place guidelines with regard to a critical mass of students, which would determine the need to gazette an Education Support Centre on site with a primary or secondary school. All primary and secondary schools receiving Education Support per capita School Grant funding and Teacher and Education Assistant staffing for 25 or more students with intellectual disabilities for two consecutive years, will be considered for the establishment of a gazetted Education Support Centre. This systemic decision will rest with a Central Office LAEP panel, which will evaluate the area's population trends and the current students' eligibility for Education Support services.

COMPLY WITH OTHER LEGISLATIVE AND ADMINISTRATIVE REQUIREMENTS

13. Requirement for Special Education Qualifications for Merit Selection of Education Support Principals

In the past, relevant Special Education qualifications were required to secure a promotional position in an Education Support facility. This requirement has changed, which seems to devalue the specialist qualifications essential to successful pedagogy and school leadership. It seems inconsistent to demand the successful completion of four fourth-year units in Special Education for teachers to achieve permanency in Education Support and to not require Special Education studies for these teachers' Principals, educational leaders and line managers.

13.1 ESPA Recommendation:

The essential criteria for all promotional positions at Education Support facilities will include the successful completion of a minimum of four fourth-year units in Special Education.

14. Merit Selection of Primary and Secondary Principals on Shared Sites

Education Support Centres, a Western Australian model of Education Support service delivery introduced in 1985, has proved to be highly successful. The Education Support Centre is a model of specialist education with attendant opportunities for integration, a characteristic much valued by parents, carers and community groups. In fact, the opportunity for enrolment in an Education Support Centre has most likely averted many confrontations between the Department of Education and those parents seeking a 'mainstream' placement for their child. Integral to the success of the Education Support Centre model of service delivery is the role of the Principal.

The Department of Education Merit Selection Job Description Form for Education Support Centre Principals includes the requirement for collaboration with the host school Principal and administration. However, an equivalent requirement does not appear in the Job Description Forms for Primary and Secondary Principals with an Education Support Centre on site.

14.1 ESPA Recommendation:

The Job Description Forms for Primary and Secondary Principals at schools with an Education Support Centre on site will be rewritten to include a requirement for collaboration equivalent to the requirement in the Job Description Form for the Education Support Centre Principals.

15. Staff Training in Physical Behaviour Management Techniques

The School Education Act (1999) identifies students with six categories of disability: intellectual, sensory, physical, neurological, cognitive and psychiatric. In some instances, students will have more than one category of disability. In a number of Education Support settings, staff are faced with the challenge of working with extremely aggressive and violent students. At times, the use of physical behaviour management techniques is necessary to ensure the safety of other students, the acting out student and staff.

15.1 ESPA Recommendation:

The Department of Education will develop a detailed policy on the use of physical behaviour management techniques. The policy will reflect the realities of the very aggressive and dangerous behaviours currently being managed in some Education Support settings.

15.2 ESPA Recommendation:

Each District Office will develop a procedure to respond to a school's request for immediate assistance to deal with aggressive and dangerous student behaviour.

15.3 ESPA Recommendation:

The Department of Education will provide recognised and thorough training in the use of passive self-defence techniques and the use of restraint to all Department of Education staff working with students with disabilities.

BEST PRACTICE

16. Education Support Teacher Recruitment

The Department of Education's recent report on staffing issues identified Education Support as one of two areas facing a critical shortage of teachers by the year 2010.

16.1 ESPA Recommendation:

The Department of Education will work with the teacher training institutions to attract more trainees into the area of Education Support.

16.2 ESPA Recommendation:

The Department of Education will provide Education Support with a higher and better profile by ensuring a positive picture of Education Support appears in all relevant publicity materials about the Department and government education in this state.

16.3 ESPA Recommendation:

The Department of Education will provide Education Support with a higher and better profile by increasing the Education Support Teacher Allowance and applying this allowance non-categorically. Every teacher with responsibility for a discrete class of students, all of whom are eligible for the Education Support per capita School Grant funding for students with intellectual disabilities, will receive the Education Support allowance irrespective of the place of enrolment. The allowance will not be less than the Education Support allowance currently paid to Teachers working in Education Support Schools.

16.4 ESPA Recommendation:

All recruitment teams established by the Department of Education to address trainee teachers and potential trainee teachers will include an experienced and positive role model from the Education Support sector.

17. Education Support Teacher Qualifications

One of the strengths of Education Support has been the requirement for specialised qualifications for permanent teaching staff. Teachers seeking permanency in Education Support must successfully complete a minimum of four fourth-year units in Special Education. This requirement seems to be on a par with the Department's requirement that teachers must have swimming and life-saving qualifications before supervising water-based excursions.

17.1 ESPA Recommendation:

The Department of Education will continue to require all teachers seeking permanency in the Education Support area of need to successfully complete a minimum of four fourth-year units in Special Education.

17.2 ESPA Recommendation:

The Department of Education will continue to use Education Support ID numbers to identify those teachers who have completed specialist qualifications in Special Education.

18. Compulsory Special Education Unit For Primary And Secondary Trainee Teachers

Currently, trainee teachers must complete a single third-year unit in Special Education. While the implementation of this requirement is commendable, it is clear that the unit is no more than a brief introduction; for example, intellectual disability is covered in 60 minutes in the Edith Cowan compulsory Special Education unit.

18.1 ESPA Recommendation:

Any Department of Education initiative for further mainstreaming of students with intellectual disabilities will be tempered by the knowledge that most teachers in mainstream settings have little or no specialist knowledge on which to base an effective educational program for the target student(s).

18.2 ESPA Recommendation:

The Department of Education will require training institutions to provide pre-service training in Special Education for all teachers. Trainees will have to satisfactorily complete this training as a prerequisite for employment with the Department of Education.

19. District Office Resources For Professional Development Of Staff

Resources are allocated to and by District Office to support curriculum development and other professional development opportunities for school-based staff. However, these professional development opportunities often have little or no relevance to Education Support. At best, Education Support staff attend professional development courses, workshops, network meetings etc. and are faced with the prospect of trying to adapt, water down or re-orient the content presented by District Office curriculum officers to meet their needs.

As a model, the recent delivery of professional development related to 'Maintenance' across Education Support settings has worked well. This professional development has been related specifically to the needs of students and staff at a specific site.

19.1 ESPA Recommendation:

A pro rata amount of the funding (human and financial) allocated to District Offices to support curriculum initiatives, will be given directly to Education Support facilities so they may purchase professional development and curriculum resources relevant to the needs of their students and staff.

20. Renaming of All Gazetted Education Support Facilities

The names given to Education Support facilities have changed over the years, from 'Training Centres' to 'Special Schools' to the current use of 'Schools', 'Education Support Centres' and 'Education Support Units'.

The Special Education connotation was dropped from the names given to Education Support Schools; Kenwick Special School became Kenwick School. In contrast, the names of most Centres includes the 'Education Support' label, such as Wirrabirra Education Support Centre. Despite the 'Centre' label, these Education Support facilities are in fact gazetted schools.

It must be assumed that the different labels were meant to be helpful; a School is a gazetted school on a segregated site (but not always, eg Castlereagh School), a Centre is a gazetted school on site with another school and a Unit is not a gazetted school and is managed by the local school. It may have been felt that using different labels could inform student placement; however, many metropolitan Education Support facilities and all country Education Support facilities have very diverse populations.

Finally, the use of three different names for Education Support facilities has led to instances of the categorical labelling of students as 'School', 'Centre' or 'Unit' students, which is not in line with best practice.

20.1 ESPA Recommendation:

All gazetted Education Support facilities will be renamed as Education Support Schools. For example, Kenwick School will become Kenwick Education Support School and Wirrabirra Education Support Centre will become Wirrabirra Education Support School. This will acknowledge each facility's status as a school and will discourage labelling students by the facility they attend.

This recommendation will become more relevant as the Education Support Schools currently on segregated sites are relocated to shared sites under the LAEP process (ESPA Recommendation 12.2) and Education Support Units become informal, local arrangements rather than a labelled model of service delivery (ESPA Recommendation 12.3).

APPENDIX 1 SURVEY OF EDUCATION SUPPORT SCHOOL COMMUNITIES 2001

Education Support Principals from Education Support Schools and Education Support Centres surveyed their school communities, using the Department of Education's document Surveying the School Community. 160 surveys were collected and collated from different settings around the state.

Responses to the Survey Questions

		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unable to Comment
1	This school is well organised and runs smoothly.	70	80	6	4	0
2	This school encourages a sense of pride in achievement and a sense of self worth.	65	85	5	5	0
3	This is a caring school.	58	90	10	2	0
4	This school has clear goals and a positive school identity.	68	82	5	2	3
5	This is a safe and secure school.	61	95	0	2	2
6	This school has high standards of student behaviour.	78	69	7	3	3
7	This school strives for high academic standards.	69	83	2	4	2
8	My child receives help from teachers when he/she has difficulty learning.	74	78	2	2	4
9	Teachers at this school are committed and enthusiastic.	84	65	5	3	3
10	Teachers at this school treat my child fairly.	56	82	10	6	6
11	My child's teachers provide a stimulating environment.	77	70	3	5	5
12	My child is encouraged to achieve to the best of his/her ability.	83	58	8	2	9
13	My child's teachers have a thorough understanding of what they teach.	59	76	8	7	10
14	There is effective behaviour management in my child's classes.	60	76	4	8	12
15	Teachers at this school care about how my child is going.	55	82	10	3	10
16	I receive helpful information about my child's progress and achievement levels.	66	76	8	8	2
17	I feel well informed about the activities of this school and its students.	68	77	10	5	0
18	I am informed promptly if my child has a problem.	62	82	8	8	0
19	The school's reports I receive about my child are informative and easy to understand.	67	85	4	4	0

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		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Unable to Comment
20	This school's staff are approachable and are willing to talk about my child's progress.	65	80	10	5	0
21	Staff at this school take my concerns seriously.	68	72	10	5	5
22	I am given opportunity to have a say about this school.	76	64	12	6	2
23	This school's goals are consistent with those I have for my child.	65	78	13	3	1
24	This school equips my child with understandings and skills he/she will need in the world beyond school.	74	67	15	4	0
25	At this school my child is able to learn how to solve problems, to question and to make decisions.	77	57	8	4	14
26	This school equips my child with personal and social skills.	55	79	14	6	6
27	This school encourages achievement across a broad range of areas.	59	75	13	8	5
28	This school is meeting the educational needs of my child.	66	75	10	4	5
29	At this school, my child's interests and talents are being developed.	50	79	14	7	10
30	Overall, I am satisfied with my child's educational progress at this school.	68	78	8	6	0

Analysis of the Data

From the data collected it is easy ascertain that the parents/carers who completed the survey are more than happy with the educational services the Education Support facilities are providing for their children. Students in these settings receive specialist programs, which enable them to learn and to achieve meaningful educational outcomes.

The majority of teachers and administrators employed at these Education Support facilities have specialist qualifications that enable them to deliver appropriate curriculum to meet the needs of all students. Staff employed at these settings who do not have Special Education qualifications are encouraged to work towards these qualifications so they may better meet the needs of their students.

When the parent community was asked to complete the survey, respondents also were asked to comment on 'The aspects I like most about this school' and 'The aspects I would like to see this school improve'. The following pages confirm the data collected by the survey and strengthen the positive standing these Education Support facilities have within their communities.

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'The aspects I like most about this school are'

- The school principal is a solid foundation for the school, staff and students.
- Teachers are caring and concerned for each child's learning.
- The caring nature of all the staff and their genuine interest in my child's progress.
- Caring and approachable.
- Staff are caring.
- The teachers are caring.
- Its caring nature.
- It's a caring school, totally committed to helping my child.
- Commitment and dedication of all staff.
- Friendly staff.
- It's a caring school, totally committed to helping my child.
- A friendly atmosphere. Everyone is working together to help all the children.
- The compassion and understanding the staff show the children. Very safe and loving feel about the school.
- Everyone is happy which rubs off to the kids (Everyone – teaching staff).
- The teachers at the ESC are always happy, smiling and understand the needs of these very special children. You could not get a better bunch of people than the teachers and volunteers at the ESC.
- I feel that my child and myself are 'part' of the school – our needs and input are important.
- The staff are approachable, friendly and always ready to listen.
- The staff are very friendly.
- The staff are friendly and understand the needs for children.
- The caring and support from the teachers and principal is great.
- Team spirit among teachers extended to parents.
- Safe, secure environment where my child is progressing confidently.
- Knowing my child is safe and I will be informed of anything unusual about my child from moods to education.
- The running of the school and the thoughtful understanding teachers, and how the teachers provide information to parents.
- Communication between Teachers/Parents.
- I'm kept informed about my child.
- I am informed about my child at all times if necessary.
- I think the school has a wonderful culture towards the parent and children – one of respect and concern.
- The staff take parents' concerns into consideration.
- Patience and tolerance towards parents/carers.
- Always willing to discuss problems and issues with the parents.
- Welcoming parents within the school.
- The teachers' positive attitude towards the parents.
- How you can talk to the teachers about any problem concerning my child and they are willing to help.
- The collaborative nature in which the Individual Education Plans are developed.
- It's small and friendly.
- The small number of students so everyone knows each other.
- Class sizes.

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'The aspects I like most about this school are'

- The level of one on one teaching.
- The individual program that is provided for my child.
- Children are treated as individuals and their needs are being met based on this.
- Understanding the needs of individual students.
- My son's individual needs are being met. He feels safe, secure and happy.
- Treating my child's problems individually so he's not getting lost in the crowd. He's happy learning now.
- Meets their needs with a specialised teacher.
- Special children require specialist programs - our Centre provides that
- Their attempts to allow my child to develop to the best of her ability.
- The vast range of learning activities covered throughout the week.
- The variety of extra-curricular activities, eg horse riding, bowling. I believe this is a wonderful experience for the children, especially those that find sitting at a desk for long periods difficult.
- Diversity of subjects through extra curricular activities, eg cooking, shopping, horse riding and even gardening and cleaning.
- The singing.
- The communication with all teachers, principal and involvement of SPER to equip him with positive behaviour.
- That my child comes back with good behaviour, also staff let you know what's going on at this school.
- The children are well disciplined. The school is run very smoothly and well organised.
- Politeness and communication skills are practised at this school.
- The way in which the students are managed.
- All students treated equally.
- The encouragement he receives when he achieves a task.
- The way the staff talk to my child.
- The teachers and principal are so patient with my child.
- Making our children feel valued and giving them a good sense of self.
- That everyone (teachers, principal, staff, etc) is very approachable and understanding.
- I like that the students are close and the teachers are pretty close.
- The teachers have always been wonderful with our child.
- My child has the best of both worlds, a specialised academic program and the opportunity to socialise with mainstream students.
- The sharing with mainstream kids and playground.
- Providing our child with the opportunity to integrate with the primary school children.
- The therapy staff help provide a comprehensive program.
- Location, reputation.

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'The aspects I would like to see this school improve are'

- Integration into mainstream.
- Children spending time in mainstream classes more.
- Greater degree of integration into mainstream schooling on an academic level.
- Because my son imitates children's socially unacceptable behaviour I would like him to spend more time with the mainstream students. So an increase with integration would be good.
- A bit more buddy class system. Mixing in the classroom for one or more subjects like Art/Science. Just playing games like cards/checkers with the mainstream kids. Just a few kids at a time.
- For the children to have the opportunity to have music/dance within the regular curriculum.
- Lack of therapy services to our children, mainly over the last three years.
- Fundraising committee for ESC and more parent and children days.
- To involve out of town parents in some areas.
- Other people's attitude to Education Support kids. Also a bus shelter for the kids.
- A bus shelter for education support kids while they wait for the bus instead of sitting on damp grass.
- The play area could be extended and have a sun protector.
- The physical outward appearance.
- The outside areas.
- Safety – fencing around the school.
- Road safety on main roads and car park entry.
- Access for a wheelchair within the classroom.
- I would like for some teachers allowing the children to be more independent. To allow the child to make mistakes and to learn from these. Enabling the child to work at their full potential without hindrance.
- For the students to have more homework and for it be a bit harder as they need work to stimulate them.
- I would like more guidance and structure regarding homework.
- That the school gets whatever it requires for the teachers and students.
- I would like to see our school funded more so that our children have every available concept at their disposal.
- Having more staff to accommodate children with 'intense' toileting needs and programs.
- More teacher coverage during breaks.
- Student bullying is a problem.
- Their ability to stop children hurting each other; eg biting, pinching etc.
- Make school reports easier to understand.
- To try and equal the amount of boys and girls in one class.
- A little more notice about up-coming meetings, etc.
- Longer notice when excursions/incursions are occurring and money is required.