

This submission is directed at **Learning disabilities** students in the Primary Years (Yrs 1 – 7 for Education Queensland students) and their learning needs.

In Education Queensland the term Learning difficulties and Learning Disabilities are clearly defined in policy (CS - 13). These definitions covers all students within Ed. Queensland schools.

Students with learning difficulties are those whose access to the curriculum is limited because of short-term or persistent problems in one or more areas of literacy, numeracy and learning how to learn

Students with learning disabilities are one small group of students with learning difficulties who because of the neurological basis of their difficulties, have persistent, long term problems and high support needs in one or more areas of literacy, numeracy or learning how to learn. These students do not have generalized intellectual impairments but rather demonstrate idiosyncratic learning styles which are determined by the nature of their specific disorders and inhibit learning at school.

(1) Inquire into the education of students with disabilities, including learning disabilities, throughout all levels and sectors of education.

a) Whether current policies and programs for students with disabilities are adequate to meet their education needs.

At this stage the provision for Learning Difficulties/Learning Disabilities is undergoing an internal change as the new process of Appraisalment is being introduced to provide a consistent approach to the identification, support and monitoring of learning needs for these students across the State. Intervention is based on several basic principles:

- students are the prime focus
- class teachers manage the process
- it is embedded in the class teaching and learning program
- schools provide coordinated structures and policy
- school communities support intervention initiatives

Access is available to all schools for the services of a Support Teacher: Learning Difficulties, whose clientele is determined by the above definitions. The ST:LD may work across several schools. The duties of the ST:LD include:

- diagnostic assessment
- identifying learning needs,
- collaboratively constructing Support Plans based on identified student learning needs
- collaboratively planning, teaching and monitoring educational programs
- recommending appropriate strategies to enhance educational outcomes
- network with other ST:LDs and other professionals
- support whole of school/s professional development program
- teach demonstration lessons where necessary
- collect and monitor data to measure progress and inform planning
- maintain specialist teaching expertise

At present there is a higher clientele base than can be managed comfortably by the current numbers of ST:LDs across schools (especially in country/remote areas).

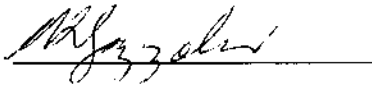
It is clear that teachers need support to cater for the growing needs of this group. Assistance required includes:

- identifying the barriers that restrict student access to the curriculum
- adjust programming to meet individual student needs
- assistance to select and implement appropriate strategies to meet those needs
- selecting appropriate resources to support student learning
- adjusting the classroom environment to support identified student's learning
- developing expertise in support staff e.g. teacher aides, parent help
- effecting a whole school approach to intervention to maximize resources (human and material)

- b)** The current and future needs for this clientele include increased funding that:
- supports the identification of the barriers to student learning and allows for intervention that addresses those barriers to education
 - is clearly defined and related directly to students identified using the Appraisal Process to maximise support (both human and material)
 - complements already existing Commonwealth initiatives (i.e. Disabilities, ABSTI)
 - supports training and ongoing professional development of appropriate personnel (Support Teacher: Learning Difficulties)
 - allows for adequate preservice training for ALL training teachers
 - provides ongoing PD for teachers in supporting students with Learning Difficulties
 - support the ongoing inclusion of LD students in mainstream classrooms (NOT streaming by ability)
 - support to implement outcomes-based education across the country that clearly defines a teaching/learning program based on what students know and can do

Funding, while distributed to State Education systems, should take into consideration the above needs and be directly related to those needs. It would be ideal to consider a National approach to the identification and support of LD students.

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