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Abstract

This paper was presented at the National Conference of regional Directors in 1987 and explains the NSW Government Education Policy for children with disabilities. The policy allows for children's enrolments to be turned down by their local school if funding or resources are thought not to be sufficiently available to meet a child's needs and where it is deemed that the child is not "capable of benefiting from regular school placement". The paper explains that integration in NSW means placement in a regular classroom, the support class in a regular school and special schools. There appears to be no requirement of schools to adapt or make extra effort to obtain necessary resources in meeting a child's needs. **Keywords: Education, School age**



INTEGRATION - A NEW SOUTH WALES PERSPECTIVE

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INTEGRATION - A NEW SOUTH WALES PERSPECTIVE.

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It is the policy of the Government of N.S.W. that children with disabilities should be able to live and be educated within their own communities. This policy is based on the principle of 'normalisation', that is, the creation of a lifestyle and set of living conditions for children with disabilities which are as close as possible to those enjoyed by the rest of the population.

It is through this policy that the benefits found to accrue to disabled students when they are educated in regular schools (Bowd 1986, Carlberg and Kavale 1980, Dunn 1968, Gallagher 1978, Hegarty et.al. 1981) will be effected. A secondary benefit will be that the community will learn about disabilities and develop a greater acceptance of diversity and in particular a greater acceptance of people who are disabled.

The implementation of this policy involved a service delivery model which Fulcher (1986) has characterised as a professional model but which is more properly an 'assessment' model. In N.S.W. the child seeking enrolment at the neighbourhood school has his or her needs assessed by school personnel, in close consultation with the parents/guardians. The school then considers its capacity to meet these needs. Should it have the capacity to provide an educational program an enrolment ensues. Should the school require additional resources the enrolment does not proceed and application is made to the Regional Director for the resources required.

At present the Regional Director has access to Commonwealth Schools Commission funds (approx. \$45,000 per region), and a staffing allocation of Teachers and Teachers Aides (Special). A full-time Regional Integration Officer is appointed to each region to manage these resources. Currently there are 37 Integration Teacher positions and 59 Integration Teachers Aide (special) positions available to regions, allocated on the basis of their student population.

The Teacher and Teacher Aide positions are provided within a flexible staffing arrangement whereby the Regional Director may deploy these positions either full time or as flexibly as 0.1 (or 1/2 day) per week.

Critics of this method have described it as 'ad hoc' but experience has shown that such flexibility is required if the target is the assessed needs of an individual student seeking enrolment at his or her neighbourhood school, wherever this may be throughout N.S.W.

This service delivery model may be contrasted with the 'rights' model which operates in Victoria (Fulcher 1986, Steer 1987) or the negotiation model which operates in Queensland (Department of Education Qld. 1986). It has several advantages:

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Apart from this assessment model, a number of traditional services assist the integration of the student with disabilities into the regular classroom:

Itinerant teachers of the deaf (N= 93) assist not only students in regular classroom (the normal caseload being approx. 12 students) but act as an important resource for the regular classroom teacher with these students in their class;

Itinerant teachers of the visually impaired (N= 48) similarly work with visually impaired students receiving their educational programs in normal classes;

Resource and remedial teachers (N= 835) specifically work with regular teachers to assist in meeting the needs of children with learning difficulties. They provide services for any student with a disability who is enrolled in the regular classroom and is experiencing learning difficulties.

The model described above has been solely concerned with the enrolment of a student with a disability in a regular classroom. Integration in N.S.W. involves two additional dimensions, the support class in the regular school and the schools for specific purposes.

Over 700 support classes are now available in the regular school delivering services to students with disabilities in a normal setting yet retaining the capacity to deliver appropriate programs. Features of this service include:

over 100 classes for moderately intellectually disabled students in regular schools (with 20 in Secondary Schools);

12 regular schools throughout the state where programs are being provided to severely intellectually disabled students;

the provision of an executive position where there are three or more support classes in a regular school.

Another aspect of integration involves the Schools for Specific Purposes (N= 118) in this State. With the publication of the Richmond Report (1983) and its acceptance by the Government, a considerable disbursement of children with disabilities from large institutions has occurred. Fortunately over 50 of our special schools can now offer programs for the severely intellectually disabled. These schools plus the classes in regular schools mentioned above have enabled a comprehensive network to be developed for such students.

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N.S.W.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

INTEGRATION STATEMENT

POLICY

It is the policy of the Government of N.S.W. that people with disabilities should be able to live and be educated within their own communities. This policy is based on the principle of 'normalisation', that is the creation of a lifestyle and set of living conditions for people with disabilities which are as close as possible to those enjoyed by the rest of the population.

The regular school environment has been found to be advantageous for many students who are disabled. A secondary benefit will be that the school community will learn about disabilities and develop a greater acceptance of diversity and, in particular, a greater acceptance of people who are disabled.

IMPLEMENTATION

The Department of Education will promote this policy by making educational placements for students with disabilities in the regular neighbourhood school when this is possible and practicable and in the best interests of the student.

The Department has been moving and will continue to move from the provision of predominantly segregated educational settings to the provision of services in the regular neighbourhood school for students with disabilities. This is being achieved by:

1. the provision of services to support students with disabilities in the regular classroom; and
2. the provision of support classes in regular schools where students with disabilities can receive appropriate educational support while experiencing the daily activities of their local community peer group.

Parents are encouraged to consider the neighbourhood school as an enrolment option for their child. The needs of the child will be assessed by Departmental and school personnel in consultation with the parents to ascertain the appropriateness of enrolment in a regular class. These principles are embodied in the policy on Enrolment of Children with Disabilities.

Parents have the right of appeal to the Regional Director regarding any placement decision, and ultimately to the Director-General of Education.

Where an optimal educational environment cannot be provided for the student in a mainstream class, the parents will be offered an alternative placement in a support class in a regular school or a school for specific purposes.

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SCHOOL MANUAL : EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT

When students with disabilities are placed in regular schools with support classes or in schools for specific purposes, the Principal will ensure that the curriculum is organised to develop in each student as much independence and integration into the community as is possible.

The Principal of a regular school with a support class will involve the students, their teachers and their parents as members of the total school community to the maximum extent possible. Regular school programs will reflect this commitment to integration.

The Principal of a school for specific purposes will design activities to promote interaction with non-disabled students, especially similar age peers. Such activities will need to be developed in co-operation with neighbouring regular schools and community groups.

REVIEW MECHANISMS

Wherever a student with disabilities is enrolled in the school, the Principal, in consultation with the parents, will conduct regular reviews of the placement to ensure that the educational setting continues to be both the most advantageous for the student and the most integrated setting available to meet the particular needs of the student. Recommendations for a change of placement will be referred to the Regional Director.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND ADVICE

Assistance and advice to schools and parents is available from School Counsellors and District Guidance Officers located throughout the State and from the Integration Officer based in each Region.

(Student Support Services Directorate, 1987)



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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

ENROLMENT OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

1. In line with the Integration Policy of the Department of Education every child with a disability must be able to attend their regular neighbourhood school where this is possible and practicable and in the best interests of the child.
2. A child with a disability is defined as one having sensory, physical, psychological or intellectual impairment which has caused a significant loss or reduction of the ability to participate in a regular educational program.
3. It is the intention of the Department of Education that children with disabilities be considered for enrolment in the regular neighbourhood school. The Principal will give due regard to the Integration Policy and the availability of the resources and support services necessary to provide an appropriate educational program for the child. The Principal is the officer responsible for making the offer of enrolment to the parent.
4. **Enrolment Procedures and Conditions:** When a child with a disability is presented for enrolment at the regular neighbourhood school the Principal shall:
 - (a) request that the parent/guardian provide a statement describing the child's condition and requirements and any other document the parent/guardian may wish to submit. Where necessary, a medical report may be requested;
 - (b) inform the District Inspector of Schools and Regional Integration Officer that the enrolment request has been received;
 - (c) consult with the School Counsellor and/or Regional Guidance Officer and obtain:
 - i) any report or information on the child which has been recorded within the Department of Education;
 - ii) any appropriate information from other agencies;
 - iii) where appropriate a clinical assessment of the child's current functioning and developmental level.

Note: For the use of information, parental concurrence is essential.

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- (d) make an assessment of the child's educational level and needs using all available sources;
 - (e) discuss the implications of the child's enrolment with the teaching and ancillary staff of the school, giving attention to:
 - i) the nature of the child's disability and requirements;
 - ii) the resources, facilities and support services advised as necessary to meet the child's needs;
 - iii) the availability of the necessary resources;
 - iv) the school organization required to meet the child's educational and personal care needs; and
 - v) in those cases where a school council has been formed, the Principal should advise the council of any decision to enrol or decline the enrolment of a child with a disability.
 - (f) discuss with the District Inspector and Regional Integration Officer the appropriateness of the available resources and whether additional resources from State Integration funding can be provided;
 - (g) on completion of the above procedures the Principal should arrange a meeting with the parent/guardian to consider all matters pertaining to the proposed enrolment, with particular emphasis on:
 - i) the views of the parent/guardian as to the child's need for regular school placement;
 - ii) the capacity of the current and/or additional resources available to the school to support the child.
5. When the decision is to enrol the child the Principal must:
- (a) ensure that all necessary support services and facilities are available at the school and so advise the parents;
 - (b) discuss the enrolment with the District Inspector and Regional Integration Officer;
 - (c) advise the parents that there will be a regular review, involving the parents, of the appropriateness of their child's continuing class placement.
 - (d) ensure that any agreements between the Principal and parents are recorded in writing.

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6. When the decision is not to enrol the child, the Principal must:
- (a) inform the parent/guardian in writing:
 - i) why enrolment is not considered to be in the best interest of the child;
 - ii) that the Regional Director, through the District Inspector, will be informed of the decision and the reasons for it;
 - iii) that the parent/guardian has the right to appeal to the Regional Director; and
 - (b) forward through the District Inspector to the Regional Director all relevant papers together with reasons for not enrolling the child.
7. In the event of an appeal, the Regional Director or his/her nominee will consult with the parents of the child and the Departmental officers involved in the original decision to ensure that the best interests of the child have been fully considered. The Regional Director may consider it appropriate to consult with the Director, Student Support Services.

The outcomes of the appeal, any condition to apply if enrolment is to proceed, and the right of further appeal to the Director-General should be communicated in writing to the parent/guardian and the school Principal by the Regional Director.

8. Continuing Enrolment: The Principal, in consultation with appropriate members of staff and other personnel, will monitor the student's progress and formally advise the District Inspector, at least annually, of the appropriateness of the enrolment. The parent/guardian will be consulted in this review process.

If the present enrolment is considered inappropriate, all relevant factors should be discussed with the District Inspector and Regional Guidance Officer.

Where the above review results in a recommendation not to continue the enrolment, the Principal will follow procedures 6(a) and (b) above and request that action be taken to arrange an offer of an alternative placement for the student.

(Student Support Services Directorate, 1987)