

Appendix two – Relevant initiatives and supports

Department of Education initiatives and services to meet the needs of students with disability in NSW public schools

Domain	Measure / support	Description
Community Inclusion	Personal Care in Schools including High Needs	Supporting students with their personal care needs while at school, in areas such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • toileting and personal hygiene • eating and drinking • mobility and positioning • managing health conditions. <p>In the classroom, teachers and school learning support officers will often combine personal care supports with learning activities.</p>
	Interpreting and translations	The Department funds the cost of interpreters for those who do not speak or understand English well, are d/Deaf or hard of hearing, or have a speech impairment. Key department documents are translated into a wide range of community languages. These translated documents include information about getting ready for school, making a complaint and support persons and advocates.
	Consulting with parents/guardians	Schools support students through planning, personalising, implementing and evaluating reasonable adjustments in consultation with parents/guardians and students as part of personalised learning and support planning.
	Ensuring that parent/guardian communication is accessible and helpful	The Department provides accessible and inclusive student and parent/guardian communication. Parents and guardians are given strategies to contact schools.
Advocacy and Safeguarding	Minister's Student Council (Department of Student Voices in Education: DOVES)	The DOVES Council was created in 2021 following a request from the NSW Government to develop a formal structure to access student views. It involves 27 advocates from each of the nine educational directorates in NSW including Connected Communities. Three students from each directorate are elected to the council. DOVES Council meets twice a term either virtually or face-to-face where students openly discuss issues to be raised with the Minister, participate in workshops, and hear about Department initiatives. DOVES Council provides advice on education and school policy as well as feedback to aid in the planning and development of Department programs. This includes, but is not limited to, the experiences of students with disability and inclusive education practice.

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	School community and consumer complaints process	The Department is committed to working with students and families to ensure all students are happy and thrive at school. The Department is working to ensure complaints are effectively managed and resolved promptly.
	Disability Advocacy Futures Program (DAFP)	The DAFP provides free, personalised individual advocacy support to students with disability and their families to navigate the education system, and work collaboratively with schools and families to provide students with options for the support they need to thrive at school. The DAFP also provides another avenue for schools to meet the needs of students with disability when encountering complex issues. The department's funding into the DAFP ceased in June 2024.
	Specific roles in schools	<p>Many people contribute to supporting students with disability and additional learning and support needs and they have a wide range of roles and responsibilities to fill. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team Around a School • Classroom teacher • Learning and support team • Learning and support teacher • Assistant principal learning and support • Transition support teacher, early intervention • Itinerant support teacher (hearing or vision) • Itinerant support teachers (conductive hearing loss) • Assistant principals (hearing or vision) • Support teacher transition • School learning support officer • School counsellor • Senior psychologist education
School Education	Team Around a School	The Team Around a School provides advice and support to schools with professional learning, individual student plans, support for diverse learners, students with complex support requirements, behaviour support and developing partnerships with external agencies. It comprises non-school based roles such as the learning and wellbeing team, networked specialist facilitators and inclusion coordinators, as well as school-based roles including assistant principal learning and support, senior psychologists education and itinerant teachers.
	HSC Disability Provisions and NAPLAN online	Disability provisions are practical arrangements that enable students with permanent or temporary disability to access the HSC examinations on the same basis as other students. NAPLAN online enables the use of tailored testing instead of a static approach. Tailored tests give students questions that are better suited to their ability, resulting in more informative assessment and more precise results.
	Equity Placement Model	The Equity Placement Model aims to reduce the gap in participation from different equity group students in opportunity classes and selective high schools.

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		<p>A percentage of student places at each school will now be held for students from the four equity groups, including gifted students with disability to increase their participation.</p> <p>The Department has also produced information sheets for teachers on supporting high potential and gifted students with disability including ADHD, anxiety, autism and dysgraphia.</p>
	Braille and Large Print	Braille and Large Print Services provide support and materials in alternate formats for students who are blind or have low vision who are supported by an itinerant support teacher (vision).
	Inclusive Assessment Program	From 2024, the Inclusive Assessment Program (IAP) provides educators with two assessment tools to assess, support and scaffold learning for students with complex learning needs. This could include students with: moderate to severe intellectual disability or mild intellectual disabilities who require extensive support for emotional regulation; or physical disabilities who need support developing their early language and learning skills, particularly those who may be non-verbal and/or pre-intentional in their communication.
	NSW Centre for Effective Reading	The NSW Centre for Effective Reading provides a model in which students who demonstrate low progress in reading following evidence-based classroom teaching will receive additional support. A three-tiered system of support is available for students and teachers: universal indirect service; targeted direct service; and intensive direct service.
	Disability Funding Reform	The Disability Funding Reform project seeks to ensure funding for students with moderate to high disability support needs is allocated equitably.
	Low Level Adjustment for Disability	<p>Through the low level adjustment for disability (LLAD) equity loading, every mainstream public school receives a learning and support teacher allocation. Learning and support teachers work directly within the school to provide additional support for students. The loading also provides mainstream schools with flexible funding to support students with additional learning and support needs.</p> <p>Amounts quoted are on a calendar year basis, are approximate and include the flexible funding and FTE component combined.</p>
	Integration Funding Support	Integration Funding Support helps schools to provide adjustments for students with disability in mainstream classes who have moderate to high learning and support needs – as defined by the Department's disability criteria.
	Support Class Establishment Grants	Establishment Grants are used by schools to purchase technology and resources needed to set up a new support class.
	Support classes	Support classes in mainstream settings are located in some primary schools, high school and central schools

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		across NSW for students with moderate to high learning and support needs.
	Schools for Specific Purposes (SSPs)	SSPs provide specialist and intensive support in a dedicated setting for students with moderate to high learning and support needs.
	Supplementary funding for Schools for Specific Purposes	This initiative was introduced as an interim solution in 2020 to temporarily alleviate critical resource constraints for Schools for Specific Purposes while a long-term solution was developed to address longstanding structural and workforce inequities issues.
	Streamlining access requests	This reform program aims to align resources for targeted supports with school efforts in making adjustments to meet the functional needs of students with disability, rather than a measure based on a diagnostic label.
	Sport and disability	The School Sport Unit Disability Program is a comprehensive initiative designed to promote inclusivity and participation in sports and physical activities among students with disability across NSW. Students can attend a number of events with their school including the Boccia and Ten Pin Bowling knockouts and the Come-and-Try athletics and Multi-Sport days.
School inclusion	Dance workshops for students with disability	These one-day workshop suit students in Years 3 to 12 and cater for all disabilities. During the workshop, students and teachers have the opportunity to discover new forms of physical expression in an engaging and supportive environment.
	D'Arts Dance Ensemble	Students with disability learn specifically choreographed repertoire to support students participation in the Schools Spectacular performance.
	Signing Choir Ensemble	Students in Years 4-12 with Auslan experience come together to perform repertoire as a part of selected music festivals.
	Connections showcase	This annual showcase is an opportunity to celebrate the creativity of NSW public school students with disability. Showcase submissions are open to students in Kindergarten to Year 12 who are interested in creative practices such as music, dance, visual arts, public speaking, film and drama. The creative and performing arts projects can be completed by schools, classes or individual students. Submissions are then compiled into a digital showcase celebrating the creativity of students with disability.

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	My Say, My Way	This initiative aims to provide schools with a suite of accessible survey approaches to enable students with disability and complex learning needs the opportunity to provide feedback on their experiences of school. It addresses a gap in schools because the mainstream Tell Them From Me (TTFM) survey is not accessible for some students. TTFM was developed for students in Year 4-12 and includes surveys that provide insights on student engagement, wellbeing and effective teaching practices. The Department plans to co-design My Say My Way with around 100 schools in 2024 and roll it out across the state in 2026.
Health	School counselling service	The school counselling service had over 1,200 full time equivalent staff as at June 2024. Every school in NSW has access to a school counsellor/school psychologist. There are also Student Support Officers to support the mental health and wellbeing of students. The department has also established a rural and remote telepsychology service. The school counselling service work closely with school learning support teams to identify and assess students with disability and those requiring additional support.
	Student Wellbeing Support	The Department supports equitable outcomes for students with a disability by connecting students to the support services they need, building collaborative partnerships across agencies and providing wrap around support to schools to meet student learning requirements.
	Specialist services and external providers	Including schools applying strategies from psychologists, speech pathologists and occupational therapists to support students' educational outcomes.
	Specialist Allied Health and Behaviour Support Provider Scheme	This scheme supports NSW public schools that may need to engage specialist allied health services to ensure learning adjustments are appropriate and effective for students. It comprises a panel of prequalified providers for schools to source services from where needed to support students with disability.
Strategy and Planning	Outcomes Framework	A comprehensive tool to understand the outcomes of students with disability, the Outcomes Framework sets out how the Department will monitor progress across high-level domains: learning growth, wellbeing and independence.
Transport	Assisted School Travel Program (ASTP)	The ASTP plays a significant role in meeting the needs of eligible students with disability by providing free specialised transport to and from school where parents/guardians are unable to provide or arrange transport for the student either fully or in part.
Infrastructure	Disability access infrastructure maintenance and integration works	Physical spaces must be accessible of all types of diverse student needs, and this needs to be incorporated into the design of new and upgraded schools.

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Workforce capability	Education Leaders Training	The Disability Standards for Education: Education Leaders training has been mandatory for directors, educational leadership, principals, deputy principals, assistant principals and head teachers since July 2020.
	Professional learning for teachers and school support staff	A range of ongoing high quality professional learning opportunities can help teachers and support staff meet the educational needs of the diverse range of learners in their classes. These include Disability Standards for Education e-learning and a suite of nine courses addressing a range of diverse disabilities.
	Inclusive Practice Hub	The Hub provides evidence-based practice teaching resources for schools to support students with disability and additional needs.
	Trauma Informed Practice	In an educational context, trauma informed practice is a strengths-based framework in which education systems, schools and school staff understand, recognise and respond effectively to the impact of trauma on students. The Department advised that there were 220 trauma informed practice facilitators across the state as at October 2023.
	Inclusive Executive Enhancement	Schools with seven or more support classes have received increased resourcing for dedicated leadership roles to support the inclusion, learning and wellbeing of students with disability. This responds to requests from schools for more dedicated support to meet students' needs.
	Inclusive Practice in Education Scholarship Program	The Department launched a scholarship program in 2019 targeting existing qualified teachers wishing to retrain in inclusive or special education. The scholarship offers a significant professional development opportunity for eligible teachers to study while maintaining their current permanent position.
	Grow Your Own – Teacher Training Program	This program, part of the NSW Teacher Supply Strategy, provides a supported pathway for school learning support officers to train as teachers. Students will benefit from having teachers experienced in working with diverse learning needs.
	School counsellor and psychologist scholarships	The department continues to offer scholarships for teachers and psychology graduates to become school counsellors or school psychologists.
	Disability Inclusion Action Plan 2021–2025	The department has recently appointed a lead, disability employment and a disability adviser to support continued delivery of Disability Inclusion Action Plan projects. This focuses on inclusive workplaces.

Source: Department of Education, 2024.