



Dear Sir/Madam

The Australian Association of Special Education (AASE) is a broadly based national organisation that advocates for the provision of quality educational services for people with disability.

The NSW Chapter has contributed to the AASE response to the review of the Disability Standards for Education (DSE) submitted by the AASE National President.

In addition to the National response, AASE NSW wishes to submit the attached document, which focuses on the recommendations from the previous review (2015).

We would be most willing to discuss our proposals and the support that our members could provide, if the opportunity arises.

With sincere good wishes,

Dr Sally Howell

President

AASE NSW

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We want to know how you think the Standards could be improved.

AASE NSW comments on Recommendations from the 2015 Review.

Recommendation 3: *That the Australian Government develop a range of exemplars of good practice which illustrate effective adjustments, including how decisions are made on what is 'reasonable'. The exemplars should be accessible to both education providers and to students with disability or their associates and serve to support development of a common language and understanding.*

AASE NSW is of the opinion that some of the existing 'exemplars' are poor illustrations of adjustments and in fact run contrary to the ideal of 'on the same basis.' For example, excluding a student from learning a language on the basis that the student has dyslexia. All exemplars of practice should illustrate evidence-based practices based on research such as those referenced by McLeskey et al., 2019. The promotion of sensory rooms apparent in some case studies is not consistent with existing evidence of best practice. The case study centred around dyslexia (McAyla) shows little understanding of dyslexia and evidence-based intervention. Problems with the case studies are too numerous to mention in this submission. AASE NSW would welcome the opportunity to assist with a review of the current case studies and the development of further case studies. NCCD case studies also warrant review.

Recommendation 4: *That the Australian Government work with professional bodies for educators (and education administrators) to strengthen access to and uptake of substantive training in disability in pre-service and in-service training, to support the effective implementation of the Standards. This should include skills-based training focused on effective conversations in the context of the Standards' intent to engage and retain students with disabilities in education.*

In recent years rather than a unit dedicated to students with disability or special education needs, 'Inclusion' units in ITE programs have been broadened to cover the full diversity of student populations. This has reduced the amount of content and time dedicated to the study of crucial skills and knowledge related to students with disability.

AASE NSW believes that teacher education courses must have at least one stand-alone unit that addresses pedagogy for students with disability, preferably linked to a quality practicum in an inclusive setting with an effective teacher. Course content must include the legal obligations of schools and teachers, the need to collaborate with students and/or their associates, information on assessment, programming, instruction, making adjustments and collaboration with specialist teachers and teacher assistants. This unit should be taught by someone with special education qualifications and preferably experience in teaching students with disability.

In addition, all units in content areas should include the full range of teaching methodologies, including teacher-directed explicit instruction as well as student-centred approaches. This is particularly important for key areas such as early literacy and numeracy instruction and would give regular teachers the tools for effective differentiation. Regular classroom teachers also need a sound preparation in practical, evidence-based classroom and behaviour management strategies. Students with disability may not receive the best education if teachers do not have requisite skills to both teach pro-social behaviour and discourage inappropriate behaviour.

AASE NSW would welcome the opportunity to contribute to the development of frameworks for both a stand-alone unit and for embedding evidence-based practices for students with disability in all units of study.

Recommendation 5: *That the Australian Government, in conjunction with State and Territory governments and the sector develop guidance for education providers in relation to:*

- *the intersection of education providers' responsibilities under the Standards for provision of reasonable adjustments and support, and the responsibilities of the NDIA under the NDIS*

AASE NSW is of the opinion that some of the case studies provided on the DSE and NCCD websites provide poor examples of the intersection of responsibilities between agencies with a risk that at least for some students with disability, education will be increasingly outsourced to therapy providers. AASE NSW believes that this is contrary to the intent of the Standards. AASE NSW notes that issues around links between health, education and therapy providers along with concerns about the impact of NDIS on evidence-based special education services have been identified (see for example Gavidia-Payne, 2020). AASE NSW is aware of at least one therapy-based organisation recommending that parents seek an exemption from school enrolment on the basis that the child is to receive an additional year of ABA therapy.

Recommendation 7: *That the Australian Government work with State and Territory governments to improve consultation practices with students or their associates, including development of policies or procedures on personalised planning for students with disability which outlining the type of consultation required, the frequency of consultation and how consultations are to be documented.*

The Standards do not address in detail what the requirements of consultation are, nor provide guidance on individualised or personalised learning plans. AASE NSW would welcome the opportunity to assist with the development of minimum requirements for collaboration and for the documentation of personalised learning. Personalised plans should detail how students with disability and/or their associates are given a voice and provided with opportunities to meaningfully take part in personalised learning/transition planning processes.

References

Gavidia-Payne, S. (2020). Implementation of Australia's National Disability Insurance Scheme: Experiences of Families of Young Children with Disabilities. *Infants & Young Children, 33*, 184-194. <https://doi.org/10.1097/IYC.000000000000169>

McLeskey J, Billingsley B, Brownell MT, Maheady L, Lewis TJ. What Are High-Leverage Practices for Special Education Teachers and Why Are They Important? *Remedial and Special Education. 2019;40(6):331-337*. doi:[10.1177/0741932518773477](https://doi.org/10.1177/0741932518773477)