Special schools as centres of expertise:
Project guidelines

This document provides guidance for the development and implementation of projects to establish special schools as centres of expertise under the initiative Every Student, Every School. These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the publication Every Student, Every School: Learning and Support.

Introduction

Every Student, Every School: Learning and Support is the NSW Department of Education and Communities’ initiative under the national partnership: More support for students with disabilities agreement.

Every Student, Every School will build the capability of all NSW public schools to provide high quality learning and support for every student with disability.

It will establish a framework for effective learning and support in every NSW public school.

This framework for learning and support comprises the following essential elements:

- **Teaching and learning**: having high expectations for every student and providing adjustments to support individual learning needs.
- **Curriculum**: working towards high quality outcomes through rigorous, meaningful and dignified learning for every student.
- **Teacher quality**: sustaining high quality professional learning and support for teachers and their school communities to understand and address the diverse learning needs of students.
- **Collaboration**: personalised learning and support plans developed and implemented in full collaboration with the student and/or their parents and carers.
- **Accountability**: meeting our obligations under the Disability Standards for Education.

These project activities will focus on 5 project areas:

- Professional learning for skilled and knowledgeable teachers
- Support for students with disability in regular classes
- Establishing special schools as centres of expertise
- Developing instruments and materials to support the teachers to understand and respond to the personalised learning and support needs of their students
- Expert support and information.

More information about the initiative and the learning and support framework is provided in the publication Every Student, Every School: Learning and Support available at: https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/every-student-every-school
Establishing special schools as centres of expertise

Every Student, Every School acknowledges that many specialist settings have developed deep knowledge and understanding of the learning and support needs of students with disability.

To enhance access to this knowledge and understanding, Every Student, Every School will develop networks to share the expertise and specialist resources that are available or developed in NSW public special schools across other schools.

Rationale

Enrolment data shows that 77% of students with disability or additional learning needs are enrolled in regular schools and this trend is continuing upward.

Teachers in all types of school settings report that students in their classes bring to school a diverse range of learning needs.

Specialist settings such as schools for specific purposes have developed deep knowledge and understanding of the needs of learners with disabilities. This includes behaviour schools, hospital schools and schools for students with intellectual and complex disabilities.

This expertise needs to be shared across all public schools in NSW.

Special Schools as Centres of Expertise will provide an opportunity for schools for specific purposes to further develop and share their knowledge and expertise with the wider educational community.

How will it work?

Each NSW public special school will receive an allocation of funding for 2012 and 2013 under the national partnership.

This funding will be used to undertake locally designed projects that develop or demonstrate best practice in supporting students with additional learning needs. Projects will also be designed to share this best practice with other local schools.

The aim of projects is to support the development of the learning and support framework in schools.

Projects may be undertaken in one or more of the following priority areas:

- assistive or augmentative technology or software as a vehicle for students to access the curriculum
- case management and support of students with complex needs including high health care needs, behaviour difficulties and collaborative interagency practice to support students and their teachers
- the provision of support and adjustments to learning programs to allow students with a communication delay or disability to achieve curriculum outcomes.
- supporting transition needs of students with disability
- building learning and support plans through collaborative partnerships with parents and communities.

Projects will include, as an essential and integral component, strategies for networking with other schools within the region to share the expertise and resources that are developed through the projects.

Which schools are involved?

Special Schools as Centres of Expertise will provide funding to 106 schools for specific purposes. This includes 10 hospital schools, 61 schools for students with intellectual disabilities and 35 behaviour schools.

Schools may choose to work individually or as a consortium. Schools may involve staff from regular schools.

Resourcing

Each school for specific purposes will receive funds in 2012 and 2013 to develop and implement projects for the specific benefit of students.

Funding allocations to schools are calculated on a base of $5,000 per school plus $3,250 per each established class in the school.

Principals providing peer mentor guidance and support for projects (see below) will receive additional funds for this role.

In addition, each region will receive an allocation of funds based on the number of support classes within the region. This funding will support networking strategies to ensure successful and useful project outcomes are shared with other schools.

Funds may be used to support project work and networking of project products.

This may include the following:

- developing and documenting a professional learning product and materials that are accessible to other schools
- purchasing expertise from outside the school to contribute to the development of a professional learning product or resource to support schools
- purchasing resources to support the development, documentation and implementation of the project.
• facilitating schools working together to share project expertise or utilise resources through innovative use of technologies and professional learning

• facilitating the participation of school staff in professional learning activities developed through the project.

Project development and support

Schools are required to develop a project plan that addresses the following core components:

• A description of the project and its product
• Rationale for the project
• How the project will be developed and implemented
• How the project product will be networked with other schools in the region.

The template accompanying this document has been developed to guide schools in preparing and documenting their project plan. Use of this template will support both project planning requirements and accountability.

To further support project development and quality outcomes, peer mentor groups of principals nominated by their colleagues, together with an academic partner, will be established to provide guidance and support in the development of each project and their critical networking components.

Project planning and approval

• Schools commence project development following the announcement of the Every Student, Every School initiative.

• The project development phase must incorporate consultation with peer mentor group/s.

• The regional team responsible for implementation of Every Student, Every School will engage with principals and school education directors as required around the networking component of projects.

• Project plans are documented using the template provided and endorsed by the school education director by 25 May 2012.

• The school education director endorses project plans in consultation with the Region’s Every Student, Every School implementation team.

• 2 November 2012
First report on progress toward achieving project outcomes and meeting networking targets

• 1 March 2013
Second report on progress toward meeting project outcomes and meeting networking targets

• 13 December 2013
Final report on achievement of project outcomes and networking targets.

Further details about reporting requirements will be provided to schools over the duration of the funding period as required.

Reporting

The Department is required to report to the Commonwealth on progress toward meeting agreed targets and outputs under the national partnership agreement. Continued national partnership funding is contingent on this reporting requirement and progress toward agreed targets.

To inform the Department’s reporting to the Commonwealth on Special schools as centres of expertise, schools will be required to submit to the Department qualitative and quantitative data at regular periods demonstrating progress on projects.

This reporting will include data about progress toward achieving project outcomes and the number of schools being supported through project networking strategies.

Principals, through their school education director, will be required to submit progress reports by the following dates:

• 1 June 2012
Approved project plans submitted to Disability Programs Directorate

Evaluation

The Commonwealth will undertake an independent evaluation of the national partnership and its effectiveness in achieving its objective, that is, Australian schools and teachers being better able to support students with disabilities.

The Department will provide data about the implementation of Every Student, Every School to inform the national evaluation. This may include data provided by schools participating in Special schools as centres of expertise.
## Summary of key dates

| Term 1, 2012 | Peer mentor groups are established  
|             | Schools commence discussions and project planning  
|             | Consultation with peer mentor group  
|             | Engagement with regional Every Student, Every School implementation team on networking component |
| End of Week 5, Term 2  
25 May 2012 | Project plans are approved by school education director  
|             | Consultation with regional senior officer with responsibility for Every Student, Every School |
| End of Week 6, Term 2  
1 June 2012 | Approved project plans due to Disability Programs Directorate for Commonwealth reporting |
| Week 4  
Term 4, 2012  
2 November 2012 | Progress report due to Disability Programs Directorate |
| Week 4  
Term 1, 2013  
1 March 2013 | Progress report due to Disability Programs Directorate |
| Week 10  
Term 4, 2013  
13 December 2013 | Final project report due to Disability Programs Directorate |

### Further information

www.det.nsw.edu.au/every-student-every-school

Ongoing updates and information about progress in NSW public schools will be made available on the website.

**NSW Department of Education and Communities Regional contact numbers for implementation of Every Student, Every School**

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