Equity and special education programs in schools: 2011 to 2012

The NSW Department of Education and Communities is spending $1.7 billion on equity and special education programs in schools as part of the 2011/2012 State Budget.

This includes:

- $1.18 billion to assist students with special learning needs
- $216 million to assist socio-economically disadvantaged school communities
- $136 million for English as a Second Language (ESL) programs to ESL students in NSW public schools and intensive English centres through the provision of specialist ESL teachers
- more than $110 million in recurrent funding for rural education programs
- more than $73 million for the employment of Aboriginal officers throughout schools, education regions and corporate areas for schools and TAFE as well as for targeted Aboriginal education and training programs.

Special education programs

The department:

- has 47 early intervention classes for children under school age with confirmed disability
- provides about $13 million annually to support children with disability to access educational programs through the community based not for profit sector.
- supports more than 6,800 students with confirmed disability and moderate or high learning and support needs in regular schools through the Integration, Funding Support Program with the provision of additional teacher and school learning support officer positions
- provides for more than 370 itinerant teachers to support students with a confirmed disability in regular and special schools and provides for more than 1,900 specialist teaching positions to support students with additional learning and support needs.
- provides special transport for about 9,500 students with disability (enrolled in NSW public and non-government schools) to travel to and from school each day.

Programs to support socio-economically (SES) disadvantaged students

Low SES School Communities National Partnership

The NSW Government is working closely with the Commonwealth in achieving the Council of Australian Governments National Education Agreement through National Partnerships.

In NSW, there are 549 NSW public schools participating in the Low Socio-economic Status School Communities National Partnership as part of a staggered implementation (four rounds) running between 2009 and 2012. Schools involved in this partnership each participate for four years. The first round of schools in New England and Western NSW regions commenced in Term 3, 2009. A total of $669.7 million, including Commonwealth and State contributions, is available for distribution to the 549 NSW public schools between 2009 and 2015.

The partnership targets the provision of the best quality teaching in schools to improve educational outcomes of students, including literacy and numeracy outcomes. In addition, the partnership aims to improve students’ transition rates to further education and employment.
Equity and special education programs in schools: 2011 to 2012

Schools will implement strategies linked to six reforms including closer engagement with business and the community.

An additional $30.9 million was allocated in 2009 over four years to NSW public schools participating in the Low SES School Communities Reform Extension Initiative. The initiative focuses on supporting targeted schools to enhance teacher quality and improve literacy and numeracy outcomes.

**Priority Schools programs**

Priority Schools programs comprise the Priority Schools Funding Program (PSFP) and the Priority Action Schools Program (PAS).

The purpose of the Priority Schools programs is to improve literacy, numeracy and engagement outcomes of socio-economically disadvantaged students as the key to reducing and eliminating the achievement gap.

Priority Schools Programs support a whole school approach to improvements in student literacy and numeracy learning outcomes through quality teaching and learning, effective classroom and school organisation and supportive parent and community partnerships.

**Priority Schools Funding Program**

The Priority Schools Funding Program provides additional assistance to school communities to reduce the achievement gap for students in schools with high concentrations of students from low socio-economic status backgrounds.

A survey was conducted in Term 1 2008 to determine the list of Priority Schools to receive funding between 2009 and 2012. Two hundred and eighty teaching positions and a total of $21.5 million in direct grants is available for distribution to 581 Priority Schools each year until 2012.

The Priority Schools Funding Program supports more than 148,000 students in 581 schools (421 primary schools, 90 high schools, 31 central schools and 39 schools for specific purposes).

**Priority Action Schools Program**

Recurrent funding of more than $22.7 million has been committed for the continuation of Priority Action Schools Program.

A total of 101 Priority Schools are receiving Priority Action Schools Program funding until 2012.

Participating schools receive between $120,000 and $360,000 in addition to the resources they receive within the Priority Schools Funding Program.

All Priority Action Schools also receive funding through the Low Socio-economic Status School Communities National Partnership.

More on PSFP and PAS schools can be found by following the link below;


**Country Areas Program**

The Country Areas Program addresses the disadvantage associated with geographic isolation. Individual schools and their communities are encouraged to develop initiatives to address specific issues faced by their students.

The Country Areas Program expends more than $7.5 million to support in excess of 25,000 students in 219 public schools and 25 Catholic schools which service the most geographically isolated areas of NSW.

More information can be found by following the link below:


**Distance Education Program**

In 2011/12 $68 million will be provided to support students enrolled in distance education.

Distance Education is provided from 15 locations in NSW. Full-time students who are isolated or whose special circumstances prevent them from attending school on a regular basis may be eligible to enrol in distance education. Single subject (Years 9 to 12) programs are also
Equity and special education programs in schools: 2011 to 2012

provided to specific categories of students wishing to study a course not offered in their home school.

Distance Education uses a range of technologies and traditional teaching mediums to engage students in blended learning based on their local context.

Access Program

More than $400,000 supports the Access Program to assist the studies of senior students in remote rural schools.

The program links 22 remote rural schools, arranged in five clusters of four to seven schools, using a range of collaborative technologies to allow small cohorts of Years 11 and 12 students to work together in real-time classes.

The program provides senior students with the opportunity to continue their studies to Year 12 at their local school without the need to travel away from the support of their community.

Different subjects are taught from different schools to a class of students aggregated from all cluster schools.

Rural Education scholarships and allowances

Rural Education scholarships and allowances totalling $1 million are provided to improve access to education for isolated students.

The Living Away from Home Allowance scheme provides financial assistance to isolated families who find it necessary to board their secondary school-aged children away from home. The allowance for each eligible student in 2012 is $1,320 with a supplementary allowance for Years 11 and 12 of $309.

The Boarding Scholarships for Isolated Students scheme replaces the Agricultural High School Boarder Scholarship and the Access Scholarships for Isolated Students.

These scholarships are awarded on a competitive basis and are available to eligible families who meet strict criteria related to isolation and economic circumstances and are valued at $4,410 each in 2012.

More information can be found by following the link below:


English as a second language

In 2011/2012, $136 million has been provided for English as a second language programs in NSW public schools and Intensive English Centres.

This funding supports:

• The English as a Second Language New Arrivals Program which provides newly arrived migrant students with on-arrival intensive English instruction.

• The English as a Second Language Targeted Support Program which supports students’ English language development and facilitates their participation in mainstream education activities following the initial support provided under the New Arrivals Program

In 2012, there are approximately 1,246 specialist English as a second language teacher positions (full time equivalent). These include:

• 896 teacher positions in regular schools, and

• another 350 teacher positions in schools and Intensive English Centres to provide on-arrival English language tuition to new arrivals.

These teachers are helping some 86,000 English as a second language students including more than 6,000 new arrivals to develop their English language and literacy skills.