



Australian Government

MAKING EVERY SCHOOL A GREAT SCHOOL

More Support for Students with Disabilities (Fact Sheet for Families)

The Australian Government believes that every child deserves a great education that meets their needs and allows them to reach their full educational potential.

Through the More Support for Students with Disabilities initiative, the Government is providing \$200 million in new funding to government and non-government education authorities and non-government schools.

This new funding will provide immediate benefits to students with disabilities and their families, such as:

- the provision of coordinated and specialised services by health and student welfare specialists within a school such as speech or occupational therapy;
- the provision of specialised assistive technologies for use in classrooms so that students are better able to learn and engage with their classmates, such as hearing loops or IT equipment;
- additional hours of in-class support from paraprofessionals, health and allied health professionals; and
- adapted curriculum tailored to their needs based on the latest research and expert advice.

In addition, students with disabilities will benefit from enhanced support for their teachers so their teachers can:

- better plan and deliver programs, lessons and activities that enhance the way students with disabilities learn and are included in the classroom
- engage paraprofessionals, health and allied health professionals to assist them in providing appropriate support for students in their classrooms, outdoor learning areas and other school learning environments like Trade Training Centres and sports facilities.

Who will benefit?

There are more than 164,000 students with disabilities in Australian schools.

These students will benefit from this new funding that will provide real and tangible support to their individual learning experiences.

Parents and families will also benefit from knowing their child's school will be better equipped to assist them in their learning environments and with their learning experiences to help them achieve their educational potential.

Throughout the course of the initiative, the most effective strategies and activities funded through the initiative will be collected and made publicly available to all parents and carers, schools and teachers, as a way of show-casing and sharing best practice. The best practice initiatives will be published on a public website.

How will the funding work?

The Australian Government will provide new funding of \$200 million to education authorities to strengthen support for students with disabilities and non government schools up until December 2013.

Education authorities will commence implementation of this initiative in schools from the beginning of the 2012 school year. Parents can talk to their local education authority to find out more about the More Support for Students with Disabilities initiative. The initiative will conclude by December 2013.

The Government's Review of Funding for Schooling is currently undertaking work to provide recommendations on the future funding arrangements for schooling in Australia beyond 2013.

As part of this work, the panel leading the review is considering the most appropriate funding arrangements for students with disabilities.

The panel is due to report to the Australian Government by the end of this year.

The difference the additional \$200 million in funding will make

Natsumi's example

Natsumi is six years old and has an intellectual disability, she lives in a rural town. She is in Year 1 at her local primary school.

Before she went to school, Natsumi's parents took her to a nearby town for early intervention services, including occupational therapy and speech therapy.

Now Natsumi is at school her parents have found it difficult to continue with these therapies. They don't want Natsumi to miss out on school to attend therapy, but find Natsumi is too tired if she goes after school.

Under this initiative, a number of schools in Natsumi's region could collaborate to employ a part time occupational therapist and a part time speech therapist to visit students and teachers at a number of schools in the region.

They would be able to assess a number of students with disabilities and provide parents and teachers with ideas and resources for the classroom and at home.

The specialists would also be able to recommend physical adjustments and equipment to that which the schools may already own, or recommend that the schools purchase or upgrade their existing equipment or technologies, to assist students.

Natsumi's parents would be happy that Natsumi will continue to receive some, if not all, of her therapy services while also at school.

They would also be reassured that there will be a consistent therapy program at home and at school that would not be too disruptive to Natsumi's routine.

David's example

David is a 17 year old high school student with a hearing impairment. He will be leaving school next year and wants to get a job as an electrician.

Recently David's school completed construction of a new Trade Training Centre and has started offering school-based apprenticeships in electronics. David is keen to take advantage of this new opportunity.

Under the More Support for Students with Disabilities initiative, David's school would be able to support his teachers in working with professional experts to make classroom modifications to enable David to access and participate in learning activities as part of his apprenticeship.

With this support, David's teachers may also be able to work with teachers at the local special school, who have developed a very successful pre-vocational program for their students. The special school teachers would be able to share their expertise and professional guidance with David's teachers.

This assistance will provide support to David in transitioning from school into work, through a personalised program which responds to David's unique needs.

Sarah's example

Sarah is a Year 4 student with an intellectual disability and attends her local primary school.

While she has been making progress in her reading, writing and maths, she is still behind the other students in her class.

Through this initiative, teachers at Sarah's school could use the funding provided to receive professional support in adapting the English and maths curriculum for Sarah and other students with disabilities.

The additional funding could also be used to hire a teacher's aide to come into the classroom and spend additional hours working with Sarah during her English and maths lessons.

Sarah's parents, teachers and her teacher's aide will be able to develop a new, personalised learning plan for Sarah to meet her specific needs at school.

Sarah's parents will now be able to see how what she is learning fits in with the new Australian Curriculum.

Over time they would find that Sarah is learning more at school and is able to participate more in her class.

Javier's example

Javier is a Year 10 student with cerebral palsy which affects his movement and speech.

Last year, Javier received a new laptop with some modifications specific to his disability funded under the National Secondary School Computer Fund, part of the Digital Education Revolution initiative.

Some of the latest assistance technology has recently become available which will enable Javier to use his laptop to communicate instantly with his classmates, as well as communicate with his friends and relatives through a range of social networking sites.

Under the More Support for Students with Disabilities initiative, Javier's school is able to purchase this new equipment and engage a professional to come into the school and train Javier and his teacher on how they can get the best out of the new technology to improve the way Javier is able to participate in classroom and social activities.

Javier's engagement in class has improved and he is now enjoying being able to share his keen scientific mind with his classmates during their weekly science lab lessons.

For more information:

Visit www.deewr.gov.au/schooling.