

Negotiated Education Plan

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What is it?

The Negotiated Education Plan (NEP) is a plan used in DECS schools, which sets out the educational needs, background information, strengths, and learning goals of a student with a disability. An NEP is an overview of the child's progress in their class and is considered an important and valuable planning tool because students with learning difficulties require additional support in order to participate and succeed at school.

Why is it used?

The purpose of the NEP is to enable teachers, parents and support officers to determine the need and learning priorities of the student, and jointly develop appropriate curriculum based on the South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability (SACSA) Framework. This is done through discussion and information sharing - taking into consideration the needs of the child.

Who is it for?

An NEP is developed and implemented if a student has a disability described by the '2007 DECS Eligibility Criteria' (Intellectual, Global Developmental Delay, Speech and/or Language, Vision, Hearing, Physical, Autistic Disorder / Asperger Disorder), and is compulsory for students identified as eligible for support under the 'DECS Students with Disabilities Policy'.

A statewide 'Student with Disabilities Database' is currently maintained of all students with disabilities as verified by guidance officers and/or speech pathologists, together with their approved levels of support.

The database is used to report to schools, lists of students with disabilities prior to the enrolment census conducted each school term. The information contained in the reports can be used by schools for checking and updating disabilities information. According to DECS, there are currently approximately 14,000 students on this database and the majority should have a NEP.

A child is identified as having a disability through a range of assessments. These assessments can be made at any age, and are generally conducted by a DECS Education Psychologist or Guidance Officer when either the school or parent raises a concern regarding the child's abilities.

The Process

- A referral is made to a Guidance Officer and/or Speech Pathologist. Students who go to school from preschool do not necessarily have to be reassessed by Guidance or Speech Services.
- Assessment and verification of disability under the 'Students with Disability Policy' is made by the Guidance Officer and/or Speech Pathologist.
- The family and school receive a copy of the assessment report and meet with the Guidance Officer to discuss the results.

If verified with a disability

- The Principal arranges a NEP meeting with the parents/caregivers, support services and agencies or preschool as appropriate.
- At the meeting, the students' strengths and needs are identified and the NEP is established.
- The suitability of the enrolling school is explored.

If a child is identified as having a disability, a District Disability Coordinator will work with the school to decide the appropriate level of support needed for the student – this determines the amount of funding a school will receive to support the strategies and goals of the NEP.

If not verified with a disability

- The Principal or delegate meets with the family, Guidance Officer and/or Speech Pathologist.
- The Principal or delegate meets with the family to negotiate internal school support.
- Appropriate programs are identified and developed to meet the learning needs of the student.
- Student progress should be reviewed regularly.

“...to enable teachers, parents and support officers to determine the need and learning priorities of the student...”

Who is involved and responsible?

The development of the NEP is the responsibility of the school. This is done in conjunction with the child's parents or caregivers, the classroom teacher, staff members who work closely with the child and any service providers who may come to the school to support the child.

The NEP is part of school recording and reporting and meetings are held regularly to discuss and update a child's NEP.

Attendees of the meeting vary, but can generally include:

- The student's tutor / support officer
- The classroom teacher
- The teacher's line manager (e.g. the Deputy Principal)
- The parent / caregiver
- A guidance counsellor from DECS
- Sometimes the child themselves.

A key part of the NEP is regular review meetings, as this is an opportunity for all involved to examine key issues in order to continue developing the students NEP to meet their needs. In the meetings, everyone discusses areas such as what subjects / topics the student has been doing in class, how they are coping, their strength / weaknesses and which areas they enjoy most.

All information is recorded and later distributed to all involved so that everybody has a shared understanding of the student's progress. This overview of the child's progress ultimately helps the child improve and develop.

Students with disabilities usually have a tutor or support officer who spends time with them at school to provide extra support. Depending on the student's academic level, in many situations, the tutor or support officer works with the student one-on-one in their normal class among the other students and class teacher, completing the same work as the rest of the class.

What does the NEP include?

An NEP should identify:

- The student's strengths, interests and motivations.
- Curriculum needs (individual programs, strategies and goals) and health care and safety needs.

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- Current concerns and barriers to learning.
- Accommodations to be made (e.g. modifications to buildings, special equipment, transport arrangements, curriculum resources etc).
- What teaching strategies will be used and if any training and development of teachers and support personnel is needed.
- Appropriate assessments.
- Parent input, student input and relevant information about social, emotional and behavioural issues.
- Appropriate school placement.
- Any agreed actions.

Important aspects of the NEP include:

- A learning plan.
- A collection of:
 - Referral forms
 - Management plans
 - Forms to access services
- Information relating to the education of students with disabilities.
- A list of DECS and non-DECS support services.

A student with a disability may not require an NEP throughout their whole time at school. After examining the student's progress, the school or parents can request the child to be re-assessed to determine if an NEP is still needed. ■