



# Special Needs Education

Elisabeth Reich, Elisabeth Special School

**'Every student with a disability has the right to gain the necessary knowledge, skills and attributes to achieve to their highest level of learning, and participate successfully in our society through quality care and teaching' (DECS Statement of Directions 2005-2010).**

Each student with a disability is an individual, and has his or her own unique and sometimes complex special needs. Once concerns about a student's ability/development comes to light there are some important steps which are taken to ensure the student has access to the required support to participate in a broad, balanced curriculum.

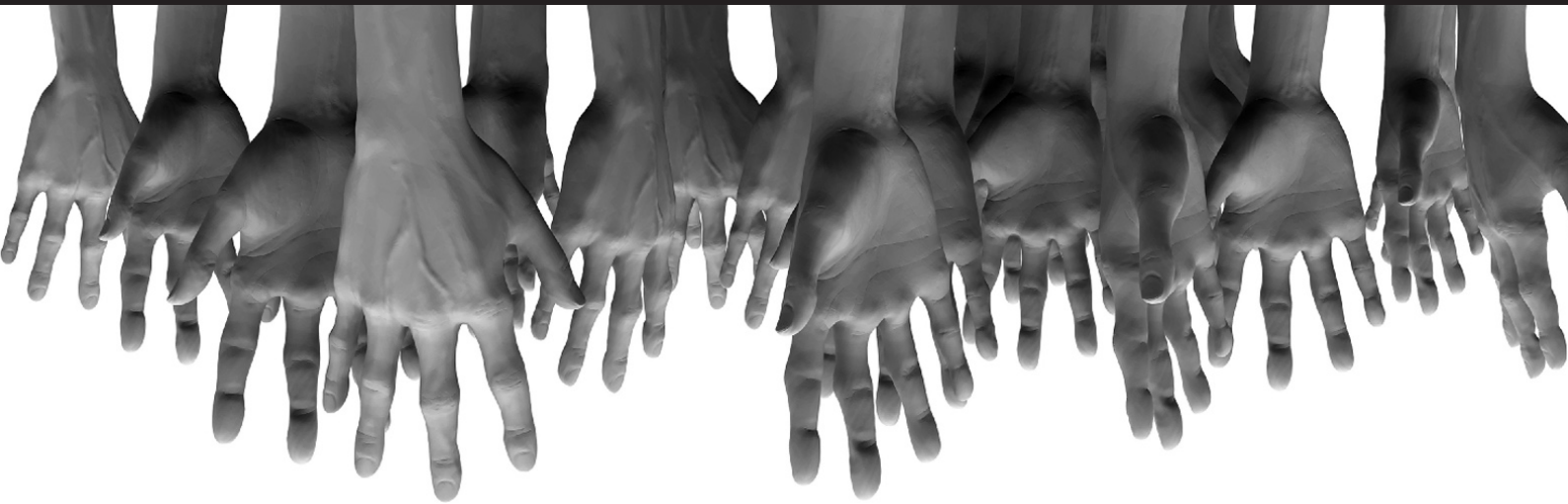
- Initial referral to DECS District Student Support and Disability Team
- Assessment is carried out to determine the level of support needed
- If a student is assessed with a disability, they are assigned a category of support and the school or centre receives funding via their funding entitlement to support the student's learning programmes and transportation.
- A school site is recommended by the DECS District Coordinator, and chosen by the family. Some site options that are available are:
  - a mainstream school class, with additional support
  - a special class or unit within a mainstream school
  - a special school
- A Negotiation Education Plan (NEP) is then formulated and reviewed regularly, and remains with the student for the duration of his or her education, outlining the student's specific learning goals. This is done in consultation with the student's

Disability Coordinator, school principal, teacher and SSO, and parent or carer.

- Statewide transition centers assist with the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school options. Students need to be 15 years or older, attending a DECS site, and have a current NEP.

One of the best ways for any child to learn is if their education at school is reinforced and encouraged at home and visa versa. The benefits of this partnership and holistic approach to teaching are seen clearly in students with disabilities. Many of the special learning needs of these students are related to their functioning and responding to their environment. Thus learning goes beyond the classroom to their everyday lives.





For example, if a communication program such as PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System) is being used at school and reinforced at home and in the community then the student is given a better opportunity to learn to communicate his or her needs wherever they are. Another example is the student's level of alertness and calmness. Learning the appropriate level of alertness and calmness in different situations and

Some of the current problems include:

#### **Students with Aspergers Syndrome**

Many students with Aspergers Syndrome (in the Autism Spectrum) have great difficulty at school. There is no intellectual disability and or multi-disability component to this syndrome and therefore many of these students do not qualify for entry into any other learning site other than mainstream school classes.

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developing ways to reach it is often difficult for some students. Having a good partnership between the school and family in this area makes it easier for the student to learn the appropriate response not just in the classroom but also in the community at large.

No system or policy is perfect in its practical application, and there are still many complex issues that must be addressed in order for the needs of these students to be met.

Many of these students have complex and challenging behavioral needs that schools find challenging and sometimes impossible to meet.

#### **Vacation Care and OSHC**

Vacation and OSHC Care services cater only for the needs of primary school students. Organisations such as Inclusion SA seek to assist such services to meet the individual needs of students with disabilities. In some situations their special needs are not able to be met and

the families are then limited in their options. Furthermore, secondary students often have the ability to care for themselves however, it is often difficult for families with secondary school students who are not able to care for themselves to find suitable care options.

As a new school year begins, it is a good time to acknowledge;

- Organisations such as IDSC/Options Coordination, Parent Advocacy, Special Needs Education Network, Autism SA and many others, who are dedicated to doing what they can to assist students to reach their full potential.
- The teachers and SSO's who work constantly and often well beyond the call of duty, so that students' special needs are met.
- The families of students, who tirelessly and constantly provide care and support and;
- The special students, who deserve nothing but the best our education system can offer. ■

