



The Independent Education Union of Australia recognises that schools face new and old challenges in providing students with the best learning opportunities.

The IEUA believes it is important that every student receives highly professional assistance, and that schools meet the educational needs of students with disabilities and special needs.

Integration programs place high demands on education staff, and there can be a tension in balancing the needs of the integration student with the needs of the whole class if appropriate support is not present. School staff are strongly committed to ensuring that every student receives appropriate physical, social, and intellectual support, but the task is overwhelming without the ongoing support of para-professionals.

Balancing the needs of a child with particular difficulties against the needs of every individual in the class can be a difficult task. The presence of a trained aide who can assist in meeting the special needs of individual students, either in working with students on individually focused learning strategies, or follow up with parents or other professionals, is vital in ensuring that all students in the class can work in a positive learning environment.

Also of importance is time for the teacher and teacher support personnel to plan individualised programs, and to liaise with appropriate organisations and health/welfare professionals outside the school.

While some students, because of the nature of their disability, receive Special Needs funding, there are many

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students who do not fit into these prescribed funding categories, but who may be experiencing special problems, such as behavioural, emotional or family problems. These problems can manifest themselves at school, and require expert assistance and frequent individualised attention.

It is important that staff dealing with these students have access to expert advice and support in responding professionally. Time and the need to balance the needs of every child in the class is often an issue, but there can be serious consequences if the concerns of such students are unable to be effectively dealt with.

The IEUA believes that in providing the minimum integration support in schools:

- That each student with a serious intellectual and/or physical or emotional disability shall have access to an integration aide with appropriate expertise in the area of disability in every learning context.
- That where there are students with serious developmental, physical or emotional disabilities, class sizes are decreased
- That time is provided for teachers and teacher aides to work together on curriculum planning, and to liaise with external agencies and parents, when teaching students with intellectual, physical or emotional difficulties.
- That the nature of funding and resources to students with special needs is reviewed and improved to reflect the range of disabilities and/or students requiring specialised support.