

Learning and support teachers



Dianne Byers
Officer

December 03, 2020

There are multiple roles teachers fill in contributing to the support of students with disability and additional learning and support needs including the learning and support team, the classroom teacher and the Learning and Support Teacher (LaST).

The LaST role is an important part of a whole school approach to ensure that students with disability have the same opportunities and choices in their education as those without.

The NSW Department of Education, the Government as well as principals and teachers have a legal obligation to ensure every student can participate fully in the curriculum on the same basis as their peers under the Disability Standards for Education (2005) law, which comes under the Disability Discrimination Act (1992).



This may be achieved in schools by making reasonable adjustments and developing programs to suit an individual student's educational needs by the provision of additional support. The LaST provides specialist assistance to students in mainstream classes and their teachers. These positions form part of a school's staffing entitlement and, due to the specialised nature and importance of the role, are filled by appropriately qualified permanent teachers .

Federation is greatly concerned by reports from schools that specialist teachers, including the LaST, are being removed from their normal role and used to cover classes. It is not appropriate to use a LaST in place of the employment of a casual teacher. Lack of access to a casual teacher is not an acceptable reason to collapse the LaST program.

Breaking continuity of learning disadvantages the students these teachers are employed to support. It also diminishes the importance of the role.

The union's view is that schools should employ additional teachers to provide timetabled in-built relief to be available to provide educational continuity where colleagues are absent. The LaST provides direct support for students with additional learning and support needs, professional specialist advice, support and mentoring to classroom teachers and they know how to build relationships with families to maximise learning opportunities for students at school and at home.

The Department's Learning and Support Teacher role description states: "In undertaking their work, the Learning and Support Teacher will not be used to provide relief for teachers/executive or to establish a separate class."

Federation Representatives are requested to ensure that all members at the workplace understand Federation's position on LaST and all other specialist teaching positions. When a school is having difficulty providing continuity of educational programs when teachers are absent, the Federation Representative should bring member concerns to the attention of the principal. Local Federation organisers are available to provide advice where the concerns cannot be resolved at the school level.