



The result we want:

Children and young people who engage with and are successful at school

Every kid... needs a good education

The situation we face

- An estimated 10-20% of children in NSW miss out on early childhood education and care (ECEC) in the year before school, compared to a 95% participation rate in most other states and territories;¹
- Literacy and numeracy rates for Aboriginal children, children of recently arrived refugees, children from low socio-economic status, children in rural and remote areas consistently fall behind;²
- There are lower Year 10 to 12 retention rates for Aboriginal students (37% for Aboriginal students compared to 68% for all students);³
- 77% of children from well-off families completed high school compared to 64% from low-income families;⁴
- 60% of students with disability are now educated in the regular class of local neighbourhood schools. Many teachers however continue to lack the knowledge, skills and experience to teach mixed ability classes.⁵

Endnotes

1 It is almost impossible to calculate the numbers of 4 year olds who access either a preschool or long day care service because of the way data is collected and problems of differentiating children by age and by "year before starting school". Hayes and Press, in their Report to the OECD Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy, 2000, use figures (graph p.36) that would indicate 90% of 4 year olds access preschools and long day care. However, we know there is some overlap between these two groups. Around 34,000 4 year olds in NSW attend Long Day Care services that would be regarded as providing a preschool program (ABS Child Care Study, 2004). The ABS Child Care Study, 2004, also indicates that 77,500 children in NSW attended preschool programs in the year before school but this is across age groups, 3 -5. The Productivity Commission notes that 34,077 4 year olds accessed preschool in NSW in 2004-05, with a further 16,720 5 year olds.

What can be done

The State Government can:

- Provide two days a week free early-childhood education for all children in the two years prior to school;
- Develop improved transition strategies for Aboriginal children moving into high school. These could be based on successful models such as the Schools as Community Centres in primary schools, the South Australian case management and mentoring model, and smaller tuition groups;
- Increase provision of English as a second language (both teachers and hours). NSW should invest in the provision of at least 100 new English as a second language (ESL) positions and extend both the eligibility for, and time allowed in, Intensive English Centres. Improved support to refugee children and young people entering the school system should be needs-based and involve interagency commitment;
- Develop resource standards for schools;
- Develop workforce strategies to attract and retain committed experienced teachers to disadvantaged schools;
- Increase resources that assist regular class teachers to teach mixed ability classes. This includes an increase in the number of school-based Support Teachers Learning Assistance (STLA) and an increase in district and regional support through the Access and Participation Team, the Behaviour Support Team and through Itinerant Support Teachers.

This can mean children accessing preschool as both 4 and 5 year olds which again makes it impossible to count the number of children in NSW government funded preschool places. (Productivity Commission, Report on Government Services, 2006, Table 14A.30)

- 2 Australian Government Productivity Commission, "Report on Government Services" 2006, www.pc.gov.au/gsp/reports/
- 3 The NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc and the NSW Department of Education, "The Report of the Review of Aboriginal Education, Yanigurra Muya: Ganggurrinyrna Yarri Guurulaw Yirringin.gurray," - Darlinghurst: NSW Department of Education and Training, August 2004, pp 25-28
- 4 Australian Government Productivity Commission, "Report on Government Services" 2006, www.pc.gov.au/gsp/reports/
- 5 NSW Treasury. NSW State Budget Papers 2006/07, Budget Paper No 3, 7-20, 7-23 www.treasury.nsw.gov.au