



**Submission to the WA
Education & Health Standing
Committee Inquiry into
support for autistic children &
young people in WA schools**

www.swanautism.org.au

Acknowledgements

SWAN acknowledges the traditional owners of the land on which this submission was produced, the Wardandi Noongar people. We acknowledge the deep spiritual connection to this land and extend our respects to community members and Elders past and present.

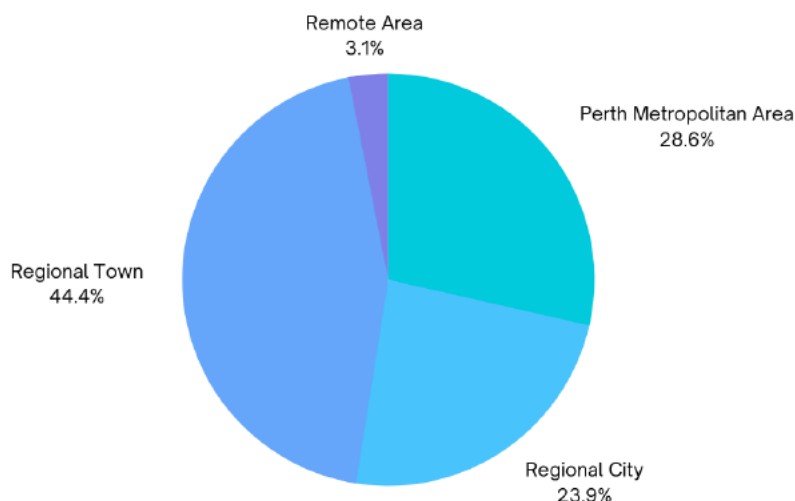
Submission preparation

This submission was prepared by South West Autism Network Inc. In order to write this submission, we listened to the views and concerns of autistic people, their families and advocates, teachers, education assistants, therapists, and the wider community. To aid in gathering quantitative and qualitative data, SWAN created a survey and invited people state-wide to participate. We listened to people throughout Western Australia about the support autistic students in WA schools receive, and had an overwhelming response to this survey, with 342 responses and 259 completed surveys (76%) received in 17 days.

Type of Survey Respondent	#
Autistic student attending a WA school	4
Autistic student who recently left school	4
Teacher	34
Education Assistant	18
Learning Support Coordinator	6
Other School Staff	9
Parent / Guardian of homeschooled student	15
Parent / Guardian of student who recently left school	17
Parent / Guardian of student attending a WA school	141
Therapist	11
Total	259

SWAN opened the survey to respondents throughout Western Australia and received responses from regional, remote and metropolitan areas as can be seen in the chart below.

What area do you live in?

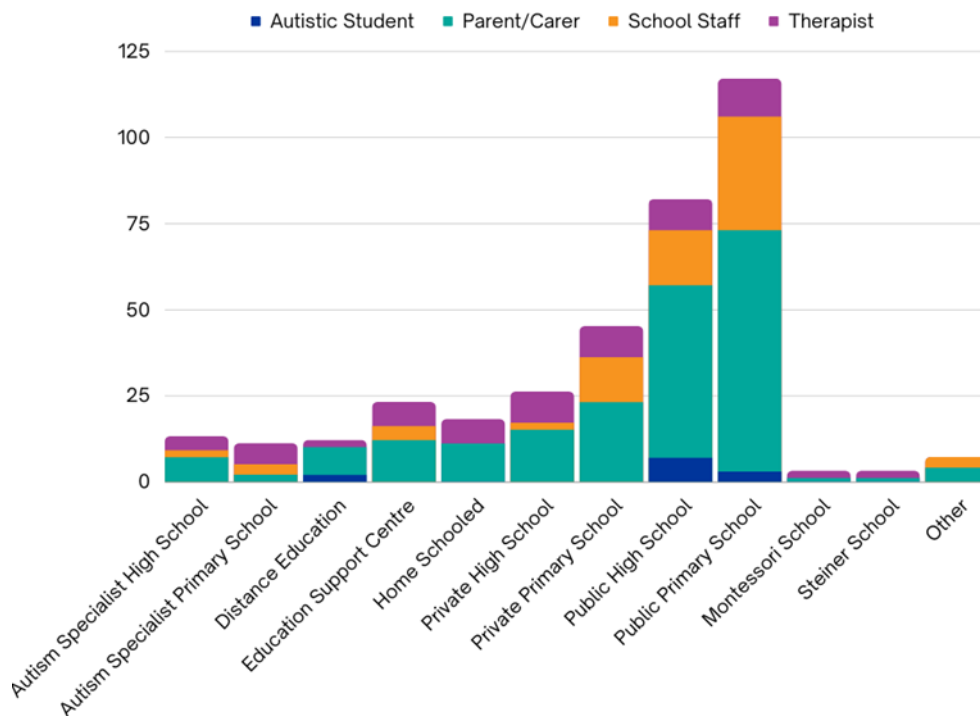


The word cloud below features the spread of postcode locations of survey respondents:



We also asked survey respondents what type of school(s) they were involved with. Respondents were able to select as many schools as they have been involved in, in order to identify whether issues are systemic or specific to individual school types.

Type of School



As a regional not-for-profit Disabled Persons and Families Organisation (DPFO) providing information, peer support and advocacy, we are able to draw on fourteen years' experience supporting autistic individuals and their families, school staff, therapists and the wider community. Our submission aims to include the voices of everyone involved in providing support to autistic children and young people in schools, as we know that while the current supports for autistic students in WA schools are rarely meeting the needs of students, it's also impacting on the wellbeing of teachers, school support staff and families statewide.

Introduction - About Us

The South West Autism Network (SWAN) is grateful to The Committee for making available this opportunity to provide feedback on the support for autistic children and young people in schools.

SWAN is a not for profit, charitable organisation supporting autistic individuals and their families living in the south west region of Western Australia for the past 14 years. We are a Disabled Persons and Families Organisation (DPFO) who are currently delivering two Commonwealth funded Information Linkages and Capacity Building (ILC) projects. We have almost 2000 registered members, with hundreds more people with disability and their families accessing free support from SWAN. All staff, volunteers and Board members either have a disability, or are the family member of someone with disability.

Our primary role in the community is to provide information, peer support, advocacy, and connection to mainstream and disability services, building the capacity of people with disability and their families to navigate Government and non-government systems in order to meet their needs and participate in their local communities. We support people seeking diagnosis, post-diagnosis, and across the lifespan, and provide autistic safe space group programs for autistic children, teens and young adults through our AutStars and YES Program, in addition to Youth Mental Health First Aid training.

The prevalence of autism in WA and projected demand for support in schools

According to [Wang et al., 2022](#), prevalence rates of autism have increased 20-30 fold in the last 40 years worldwide, with research now indicating that one in every 100 individuals will have a diagnosis of autism ([Ziedan et al., 2022](#)). In Australia, there were 205,200 autistic Australians recorded in 2018, up from 164,000 in 2015 ([Australian Bureau of Statistics \(ABS\), 2018](#)).

There are no accurate records in Australia for the number of people diagnosed with autism, as there is no compulsory state-based or national register of autism diagnoses, and not all formally diagnosed autistic people are participants in the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS). The [National Disability Insurance Agency \(NDIA\)](#) reports that as at 31st March 2023, of the 592,059 active National NDIS participants, 35% (207,385) participants had a primary disability of autism, making it the most common disability for NDIS participants. Below is the [NDIS Demographic Chart Data for Autism](#):

As at 31 Mar 2023	Autism	All participants	Proportion - autism	Proportion - All participants
State/Territory				
NSW	60,666	177,277	29%	30%
VIC	51,827	158,480	25%	27%
QLD	46,291	125,549	22%	21%
WA	18,848	50,994	9%	9%
SA	20,659	51,072	10%	9%
TAS	4,309	13,049	2%	2%
NT	1,253	5,522	1%	1%
ACT	3,511	10,060	2%	2%
OT	20	51	0%	0%
Missing	<11	<11	0%	0%
Total	207,385	592,059	100%	100%
Age band				
0 to 6	21,098	95,773	10%	16%
7 to 14	108,669	155,651	52%	26%
15 to 18	33,217	50,409	16%	9%
19 to 24	23,208	48,444	11%	8%
25 to 34	12,858	51,495	6%	9%
35 to 44	4,831	46,070	2%	8%
45 to 54	2,325	54,034	1%	9%
55 to 64	951	63,988	0%	11%
65+	228	26,195	0%	4%
Total	207,385	592,059	100%	100%

Of note in the table above, only 9% (18,848) of Western Australian NDIS participants have autism as their primary diagnosis, compared with 30% for NSW, 27% for VIC and 21% for

QLD. As per our [submission](#) to the State Government on Child Development Services in October 2022, access to diagnostic services in Western Australia is seriously limited. There is currently a wait time of up to 4 years for an autism diagnostic assessment in WA, with people waiting up to 2 years for a paediatrician appointment and up to a further 2 years for diagnostic assessment through the public system. This has been exacerbated by [changes to Medicare](#) effective 1st March 2023. A Medicare rebate for diagnostic assessment is now available for most disabilities via referral from a GP up to the age of 25 years, however autism has been classified as a Complex Neurodevelopmental Disorder, with Medicare rebate only available via referral from a paediatrician or psychiatrist.

Given that waitlists are so long for the public system here in Western Australia and a substantial portion of the population cannot afford the cost of a private autism assessment, prevalence rates recorded across certain demographics do not accurately reflect actual rates of autistic individuals in our state. A portion of individuals are self-identified autistic, without a formal diagnosis or formal supports and a large number of individuals (across the lifespan) will be unable to undergo a formal assessment due to financial, accessibility, or mental illness constraints.

It's clear that the prevalence of autism in WA is grossly under-diagnosed compared to other Australian states. Providing funded supports in WA schools only where a formal diagnosis of autism has been confirmed by two-three clinical diagnosticians comprising paediatrician, psychologist, and speech pathologist, is a great disservice to WA students, restricting access to learning and development for neurodivergent students.

We note also that as per the [Disability, Ageing and Carers Australia: Summary of Findings 2018](#), changes to the criteria used to clinically diagnose autism have been subject to some variation since first appearing in the DSM-III in 1980, with diagnostic criteria being clarified over time. This has impacted the number of individuals formally diagnosed with autism across the different age groups, reflecting the marked decrease in prevalence of diagnosed individuals in the higher age bands, as shown in the NDIS table on page 5.

The prevalence of autism in WA is not actually relevant to support for autistic students in education. Lack of neurodiversity affirming support, accommodations, accessible classroom environments and teaching styles in Western Australia are directly resulting in teachers directing parents to seek autism diagnosis for their children. The current curriculum, classroom environment, average class size and education model are in many ways unsuitable for neurodivergent students, who are not coping in today's classrooms. Teachers are noticing these difficulties, and where teachers are knowledgeable about autism, they are recommending that parents seek an autism diagnosis in order for the school to apply for Education Assistance funding. If the curriculum and teaching methodologies are amended to enable neurodivergent students to be accepted, fully included, and accommodated in WA classrooms, there will be less need for this to occur.

Current support available for autistic students in WA schools, including consideration of how

- a) evidence-based practices are implemented across the school system; and
- b) school supports are co-ordinated with other service areas to respond to the needs of autistic students and their families

It is extremely important to consider the experience of people directly affected by the current support available for autistic students in WA schools. Eight autistic students currently attending or who recently left a WA school responded to our survey. We asked them how they feel at school. Respondents were able to choose multiple options, and their responses in the table below clearly reflect the variability of support they receive in school from one day to the next, from one class to the next, and from one school to the next.

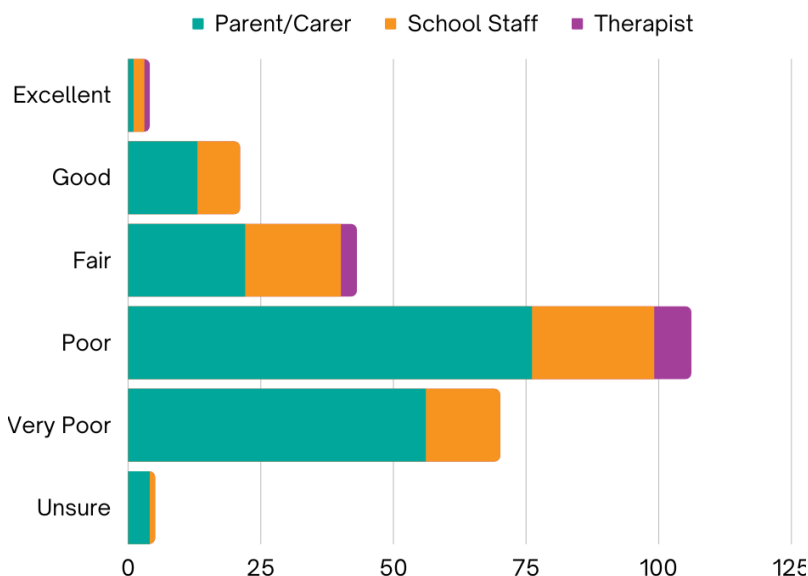
Autistic student feedback on how they feel while at school
Energetic, Unsafe.
Safe, Like my Education Assistant understands me, Neutral, Scared/Anxious, Stressed, Bored, Like I have to pretend to fit in.
Safe, Included, Happy, Able to be myself, Like my teacher understands me, Unsafe, Scared/Anxious, Drained/Exhausted, Confident.
Like my teacher understands me, Neutral, Scared/Anxious, Drained/Exhausted, Stressed, Bored, Like my teacher doesn't understand me, Like I have to pretend to fit in.
Like my teacher understands me, Like my teacher doesn't understand me, Unsafe, Scared/Anxious, Like my Education Assistant doesn't understand me.
Unsafe, Excluded, Scared/Anxious, Stressed, Drained/Exhausted, Like I have to pretend to fit in, Like my teacher doesn't understand me, Like my Education Assistant doesn't understand me.
Unsafe, Excluded, Unhappy, Drained/Exhausted, Like I have to pretend to fit in, Like my teacher doesn't understand me.
Unsafe, Excluded, Unhappy, Scared/Anxious, Stressed, Drained/ Exhausted, Like I have to pretend to fit in, Like my teacher doesn't understand me, Like my Education Assistant doesn't understand me.

Early childhood, primary and secondary education plays a critical role in the learning, participation and wellbeing of autistic children and their families. According to the [Australian Institute of Health and Welfare \(2017\)](#), in 2015 85% of autistic people aged 5 to 20yrs, reported difficulty at school, with the five most common types of difficulties experienced being:

- Fitting in socially (63%)
- Learning difficulties (62%)
- Communication difficulties (52%)
- Intellectual difficulties (27%), and
- Difficulties sitting (18%)

Based on the results of our recent survey, the current availability of supports for neurodivergent students in WA schools is significantly lacking, as reflected in the graph on the following page.

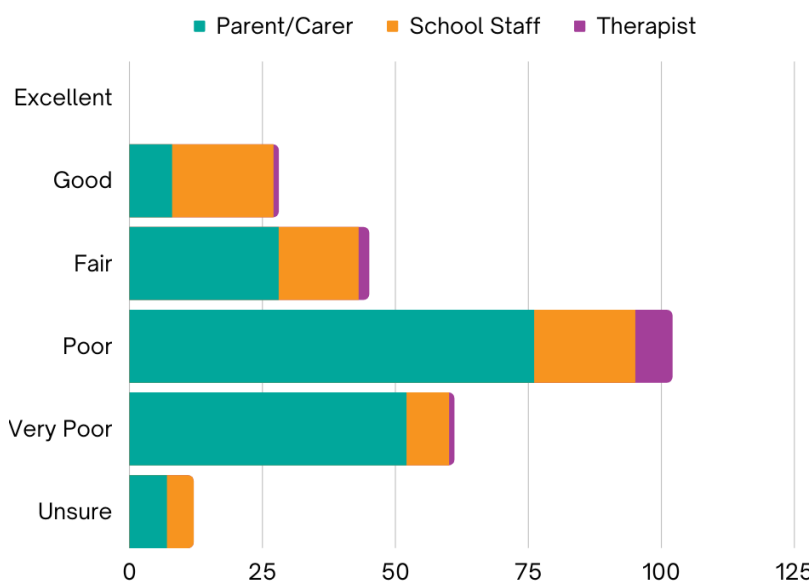
Availability of Support



Of the 249 survey respondents who answered this question, only 10% rated availability of support for autistic students in WA as excellent or good. Alarming, 70.7% rated availability of support as poor or very poor. Without a substantial increase in Government support, funding, and investment in training for teachers and support staff, neurodivergent students are likely to fall further behind than their neurotypical peers, be at greater risk of academic decline, social isolation, and poor mental health. Longer term, there is the risk that insufficient support during school years will impact negatively on an autistic persons' self-esteem and ability to gain and maintain financial independence and autonomy in adulthood; hence the necessity to provide greater support during early childhood, primary school, and adolescence.

In addition to lack of support availability, survey respondents also reported issues with the quality of support in WA schools, as shown in the graph below.

Quality of Support



Of the 248 survey respondents who answered this question, no one rated the quality of support for autistic students as excellent. 11.3% rated the quality of support as good, and concerningly, 65.7% rated the quality of support for autistic students in WA schools as poor or very poor. We note also that 40.9% of school staff responding to this question rated the quality of support as poor or very poor, and only 28.7% of school staff rated the quality of support in schools as good.

We asked survey respondents to tell us what supports in WA schools are currently working well. Here are some of their comments:

Students:

“Being allowed stim products in class helps a lot. If I could wear my headphones and have more in depth instructions I'd feel more comfortable but I am yet to access that.”

“in school i used to have an teachers assistant to help me stay on track, this support was vital for me, but was often taken away to aid other students or simply because someone i never met decided i didn't need it.”

“One of my main supports is for me, is to be allowed to wear noise cancelling headphones in class. However other than that my only other real support is to be allowed breaks outside my classroom or in student services.”

“I hid in the library at lunch time, but I wasn't allowed in at recess.”

Parents / Carers:

“EA assistance to help interpret and carry out teaching instructions, teachers who take the time to get to know the students and how to engage and include them in the learning, teachers who can give visual instructions to complement their teaching, break down instructions to smaller more manageable chunks, and scaffold the assessments.”

“Education Assistants are fabulous if your child has a qualified, understanding and committed one. But having them for half a day or particular days is not appropriate. We can not ask our child to be only Autistic at these times that fit into limited funding for EA time.”

“If they were working why did my daughter's mental health deteriorated so much at the hands of DOE to the point of suicide attempts at school.”

“Our school now works with the parents and takes the time to understand the child. They took the time to understand our son and treat him as an individual.”

“Some schools seem to have more motivation and the willingness to have a holistic integrated approach to providing the correct individualised support for ASD students and families. Staff with knowledge is crucial, this is all levels of staff, not just the frontline teachers and assistants, but management staff as well. Flexibility with attendance, dress codes, and integration with non-core subjects ie language is important. Individual support plans, that are tailored to meet the particular needs of each student should be accommodated, as no two students are the same.”

School Staff:

“When staff who work directly with autistic children have been trained on neurodiversity and what is reasonable to expect and how to help autistic children thrive, then autistic children feel more comfortable and are able to achieve so much more.”

“Increased awareness by schools, students/teachers becoming more understanding of neurodivergence.”

“Individual schools, leadership teams, teachers and EAs who go above and beyond to ensure students have success.”

“Paraprofessional access in schools works well. We allow speech therapists/OTs etc on campus to work with the students to allow parents flexibility and also to help train our staff.”

“I have not seen any supports implemented and I am not listened to when I suggest extra support.”

“SSEND visiting teacher support and school psych support - the range of resources available, the supports being implemented across the whole school to support ASD and neurotypical students.”

“Staff who have time to develop resources, manipulate curriculum or are able to work with students on social scripts are great supports but these are not in abundance in public schools.”

Therapists:

“Schools that have break cards and sensory chill out spaces - and actually take the time to work with the child/parent/therapist to create IEP’s and one-page profiles that are practically implemented are schools where I think autistic kids feel heard and supported.”

“There are some teachers and education assistants in WA schools that invest their absolute best efforts, time and care into supporting their autistic students.”

“Schools working with therapists on implementing strategies for continuity across environments. Building knowledge of inclusive practices.”

We also asked survey respondents to tell us about what isn’t working well in WA schools. We received an extremely large volume of comments, and many of the responses are heartbreaking. We encourage you to read this section in the attached Addendum thoroughly, as we are only able to include a very small number of comments in this submission. Here are some of their comments:

Students:

“The teachers and other students bullied me. Boys touched my private parts or hit me with things and the teachers saw and did nothing.”

“School is a very loud overstimulating fast paced environment. With friends that understand me it is passable but regardless it leaves me tired and burned out. I need an easier access to information and sensory and other help to get through it.”

“The management dismissed my issues, bullying, and suicidal ideation.”

“I was a victim of extreme discrimination and bullying and gaslighting from teachers. Teachers would also discriminate against me by publicly comparing me to other students who lacked my disabilities and weren't the subject of frequent assault.”

Parents / Carers:

“Education staff refusing to apply for support funding, refusing to do IEPs, refusing to loop parents in, refusing to use communication books, locking AAC devices in the cupboard, withdrawing supports then blaming student for dysregulated behaviour, refusing to call in SSEND, refusing students' therapists access to the school. Staff are also adamant that they know best and that parent / therapist advice is not needed / unwelcome, while continually blaming the student for the issues.”

‘All teachers encounter neurodivergent students in their classrooms, but training on autism and other disabilities is NOT required, nor is it part of their degree. This is a major problem - and directly leads to staff blaming neurodivergent students for not coping with their unsuitable teaching styles and classroom environment. There were no attempts from staff to develop any support systems for our kids, nor undertake appropriate training. Schools frequently refuse to call in SSEND - this should be compulsory, not optional. Our son can't control his body temperature, and needs air conditioning in summer to prevent febrile convulsions. The Principal refused to apply for funding for an air conditioner from the Dept of Education, instead telling us to keep him home from school on hot days (essentially denying him an education because he was too lazy to fill out a form). They were also extremely quick to remove the supports our kids needed, then blame them for not being able to cope without the supports. Seriously, would you remove a paralysed student's wheelchair from the classroom?’

“Funding being dispersed at the schools discretion and no obligation to support the student that for the funding. Teachers can be ableist and unaware. Senior staff can be dismissive or unresponsive.”

“Forcing kids out of mainstream high school because of a lack of willingness to provide adaptive and supported programs... especially for kids who lack intellectual disability but have profound autism - all kids deserve to be around a variety and diversity of kids and school environments that are supportive and work for autistic kids work for all kids.”

“In absolutely everything. From class sizes to how content is taught. To framing life skills and abilities rather than remembering facts that someone else deemed important. My kids get penalised for learning differently to others. They should be celebrated for it not belittled and discouraged.”

“Lack of trained staff. Lack of resources. Class sizes are too large. Inflexible curriculum and timetable. Lack of staff to support students in classrooms and during break times. Lack of understanding by peers and community. Bullying. Treating

autistic students with the understanding that they are all the same. Physically restraining students. Too many being excluded, expelled or suspended. Telling students that they can attend part time because they are not coping, where in reality the staff are unable to provide for them in the school system. No support staff, such as speech therapists, OTs, psychologist working full time in schools.”

“The gap we personally struggle with is support for students during break times, in our experience support is limited to class times with the exception of students who need assistance with personal hygiene or feeding, however the effects of autism on social and emotional development and independence make break times one of the most challenging times of the day for some students, the lack of support available to students with additional needs during these times has personally led to 17 days of exclusion from education for my son this year (semester 1 alone) this is over 10% of attendance decline, which negatively impacts on educational inclusion, relationships or student/staff rapport and self/ world views.”

School Staff:

“Allocated funding is absolutely ridiculous. Many students require support at different times throughout the day which cannot be 'scheduled in' to a time. Much more efficient to have someone there at all times to be able to support the students to prevent meltdowns.”

“Classrooms aren't set up to allow autistic students quiet time, to withdraw when becoming overstimulated. Teachers of young children are required to supervise them- a student who needs to withdraw needs an adult who can be close enough to supervise/support- there is no funding for extra adults in a school to do that. If a teacher is on their own in a classroom with 30 children they can't leave their class to support that student. Autistic students therefore have to stay in the classroom which can lead to negative behaviour when they can no longer cope with the environment.”

“Insufficient funding for education assistant support in and out of the classroom. Students need more support in the classroom to access reduced curriculum expectations. Students also need more support from counsellors or school psychologists to support their social needs. Education assistants are also needed to prepare resources for students with ASD but due to limited funding in many cases, resource preparation takes away from classroom support time. We also need more clarity in the external services support that is available to students with ASD to avoid delays in parents accessing any support.”

“Little to no training for staff- both teachers and assistants Little to no knowledge about dealing with autistic children that are on different levels of the spectrum Limited programmes available to teach and support autistic children.”

“The contemporary school institution by design is overwhelming to autistic students - too much sensory stimulus during class/lesson transitions, loud noises such as sirens, too many students in classroom cohorts.”

“Some don't get the funding and support that they need. Funding can be very varied. Some school staff are very set in their ways and not flexible in their thinking and delivery to be able to meet the needs of students with additional needs. Some excursions are not thought out well enough to meet the individual needs of their

students with ASD, the disrupted routine and unknown schedule can cause lots of anxiety for some kids.”

“The special needs assistant resourcing is based on diagnosis rather than need. Some students, particularly in Early Childhood and Years 1 -3 are underfunded as they need more time and support to develop strategies to manage their difficulties and emotions. Assessment and diagnosis is taking up to two years and therefore adequate funding is not available. Some of these students also have co-morbid ADHD or ADD which also does not attract additional disability resourcing unless a very complex and time consuming checklist is submitted. For kindy aged children this can take some time as staff need to observe the student and gather data to support the check-list. Kindy students are automatically given Level 1 funding despite their diagnosis. There also appears to be very strict criteria for the Specialised Learning Programs and some students are missing out.”

“There is still a high level of anxiety. A lot of other students trigger other students. Maybe smaller sized schools and classes for more 1:1 support. There is too much focus on the medical model of ASD -educators, support workers need to be aware of social emotional strategies and practices do students can feel more inclusive, safe and are able to adjust to the wider community when leaving school.”

“When no help is available at all it doesn’t work at all. Currently have autistic child in pp with own education assistant and another education assistant for the rest of the class but no funding in year 1 for the autistic child so 1 teacher 24 students plus the autistic student. Another scenario, autistic child with only 2 days of support and 3 days a week a struggle for teacher and class. Learning hard to achieve.”

Therapists:

“There appears to be no minimum standard and no clear rule for what is good support. It is unclear to families on what support they can expect and hold a school accountable for.”

“So many school have no time to implement strategies or they simply don’t know enough about autism to work with autistic kids. Classrooms are a sensory nightmare for many neurodivergent kids - bright lights, stuff hanging from the ceiling and walls, teachers raising their voices etc.”

“Need less behavioural approaches to managing ‘disruptive behaviours’. More time needs to be spent building rapport and focusing on a strengths-based model of support.”

“Minimal education dept resources and training to support teachers to implement accommodations for autistic clients and why these are required. Minimal training resulting in a medical model view of neurodivergence/disability as a whole. Limitations in education assistant funding for autistic students.”

It was reported by [ABS \(2018\)](#) that in 2018, 92.3% (101,900) of young autistic people aged 5-20 years experienced some form of educational restriction, with some unable to attend school because of lack of support for their disability-related learning needs. NDIA have captured outcomes data for autistic participants aged 0-14yrs on education outcomes, comparing a baseline for their entry into the scheme with outcomes two years later. As at

31st March 2023, only 65% of autistic participants aged 0-14yrs were attending mainstream schools, compared with the baseline of 72%. Despite 2 years of NDIS funded support, 7% fewer autistic NDIS participants in that age group are now attending mainstream schools. As State-based Education Departments are responsible for support for autistic students within schools (rather than NDIS), this indicates that current school-based supports for autistic students are insufficient to meet needs. As can be seen in the table below, SWAN's extensive interactions with autistic people and families over the last 14 years emphasise the lack of support in WA schools, with enquiries regarding this issue increasing.

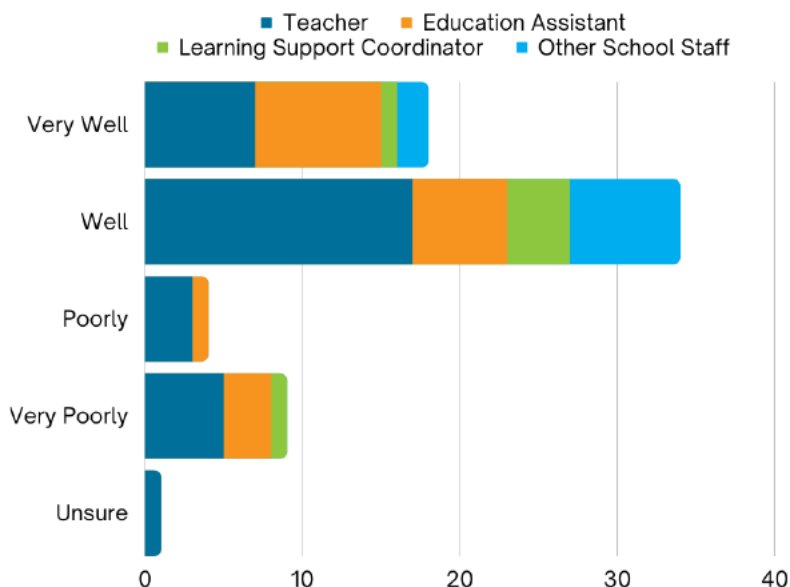
Enquiries to SWAN about issues with schooling					
2018 6mths	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023 6mths
12	149	144	488	504	378

Note that the figures for 2018 and 2023 are both for 6 month periods only.

[ABS \(2018\)](#) reported that two in five (40.4%) autistic students needed special tuition and 32% needed help from a counsellor or disability support person. Of great concern, it was also reported that almost half the autistic young people aged 5-20 years (45.9%) indicated they needed more support or assistance at school than what they were receiving.

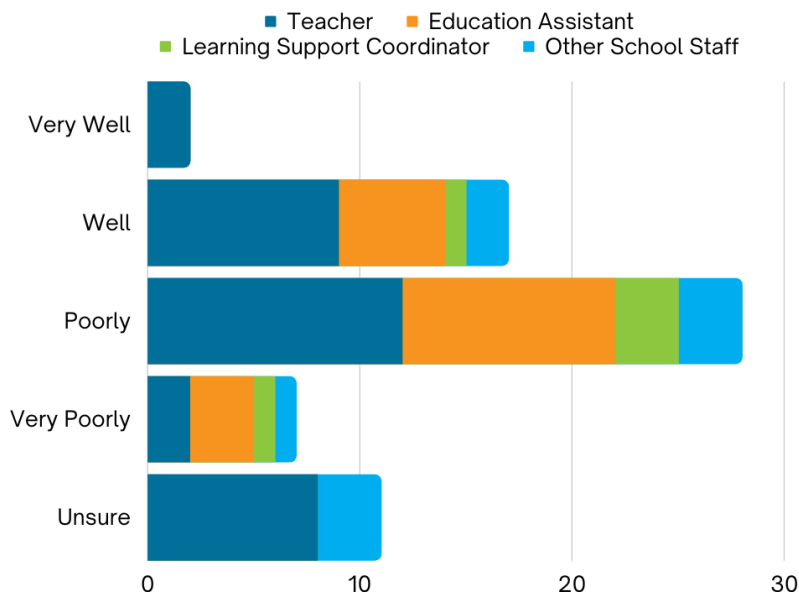
In order to source data on general knowledge about autism among education employees, and identify knowledge gaps; our survey asked school staff to rate how well they understand autism. Responses to this question are detailed in the graph below:

How well do you understand autism?



Excepting the 4 staff who identified as being autistic themselves, the 18 school staff who indicated that they understand autism 'very well' also tended to suggest that school staff would benefit from fewer training topics, which may signify a lower level of understanding than self-assessment indicates. When asked to reflect on how well co-workers understand autism, school staff responded quite differently.

How well do other staff understand autism?



It's important to note that both graphs and their accompanying comments highlighted the fact that Professional Development (PD) training on autism is entirely optional, and is not included in the current undergraduate training for school teachers. Some staff choose to undertake PD on autism, however the quality and amount of this training varies greatly. The accompanying comments to this question indicated a high degree of variability in staff knowledge and understanding of autism, with some school staff having undertaken extensive training, including in their own time, some having undertaken a limited amount of training, and many having undertaken no training on autism.

School Staff:

"I know enough to know I need to know more. I can support my students to a degree, but in my class of 24 I have 11 students with substantial special needs. I cannot spread myself that thinly no matter how hard I try."

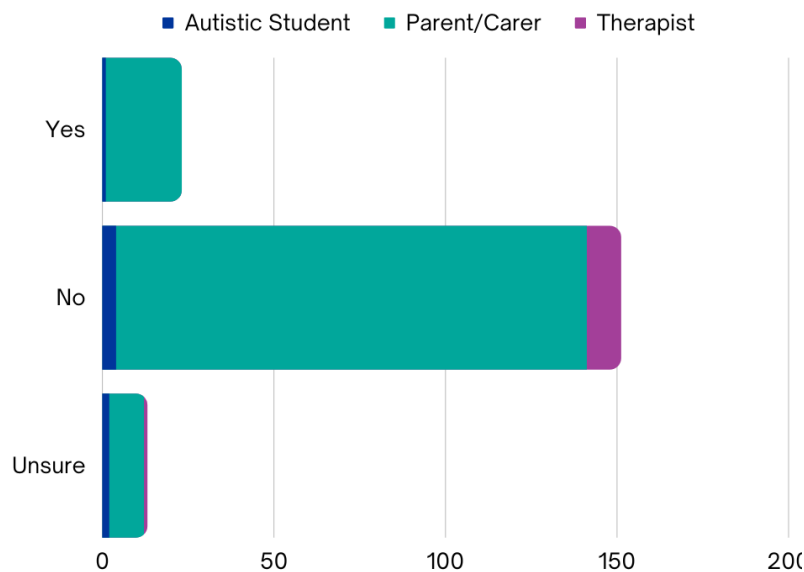
"I undergo professional development to assist students with autism regularly. However, I pay for this on my own and do this outside of work hours. Some EAS do not have the money to be able to do this."

"I'm still learning as much as I can, by choice. All teachers especially the graduates need to have training to support neurodiverse students in their classroom, there are so many students in classrooms with and without a diagnosis for ASD. Better teacher training and understanding will benefit all students."

"... some ASD teaching staff [understand autism very poorly] as students are often deemed to be disrespectful or rude for what is clearly an autistic trait. ie. Monotone, lack of eye contact, taking or touching student belongings without asking/prior discussion."

We also asked students, parent/carers and therapists if they felt school staff understand autism:

Do school staff understand autism?



Of the 187 respondents who answered this question, 80.7% of survey respondents felt that school staff do not understand autism, while 12.3% felt that school staff do understand autism. Again, the accompanying comments indicated a high degree of variability in staff knowledge and understanding of autism:

Students:

“They need special needs training where autistic people share their experiences and what is/is not helpful.”

“School physically hurts. It’s too loud, too bright, too many changes. I couldn’t keep up and it was exhausting. I ended up with autistic burnout in the psych unit. If school had supported me that wouldn’t have happened.”

Parents / Carers:

“It’s a lottery as to what type of teacher will enforce their erroneous beliefs about autism on the student. They can be enormously supportive or cause lifelong damage to the psyche of the student. Many \$ in psychology services are now spent trying to undo the trauma of the school years for our child.”

“Many of the teachers I have come into contact with DON’T want autistic students in their classrooms. Not because they are horrible people but because they don’t have the training to help them succeed or even the time or resources. Too many students in the class.”

“Most staff know nothing about ASD and if they think they do it is based off of stereotypes.”

“When visiting schools many assumed our kid had an intellectual disability based on an ASD diagnosis; no understanding of the variation in support needs between kids and between days; no understanding of sensory needs, the impacts and the supports;

no understanding of interception and it's impacts and how it can be improved; neuro affirming practices in the classroom are lacking; training if any is outdated.

“One of my daughter's current teachers has autism herself - which has been THE best support!”

“Training for teachers is massively outdated and ABA based. No Autistic input at all.”

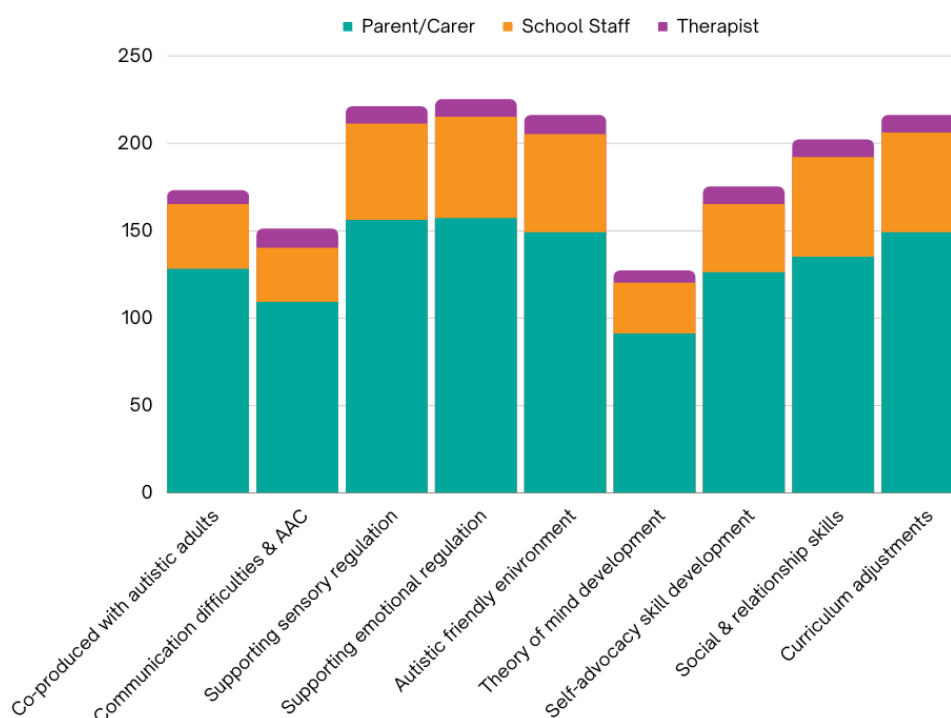
Therapists:

“It seems to be a teachers choice if they choose to learn and seek to understand. Some teachers are incredibly motivated to learn and support students, others are not. There appears to be no expectation that teachers will learn and no accountability placed on a school or teacher if a student is not supported.”

“Some do but Most don't! They have outdated views and biases based on outdated information and don't keep up to date in research! They often miss autism because it's not 'typical male presentation'.”

School staff, parent/carers and therapists were also asked what training about autism they felt would improve support for autistic students in WA schools. The results from this question can be seen in the graph below.

Training for School Staff



In addition to the above, suggestions for other training that would improve support for autistic students in WA schools included:

- Dr Ross Greene's Collaborative and Proactive Solutions
- Double Empathy – teaching neurotypical people to accommodate autistic communication and social styles (communication and social interaction are both two-way streets)

- Executive Functioning Skills and Life Skills
- Pathological Demand Avoidance (PDA)
- Trauma Informed Practice
- Youth Mental Health First Aid

The Commonwealth funded Positive Partnerships training was also highly recommended by some school staff, however, as with all professional development training about autism, this is entirely optional.

This survey question attracted 71 (optional) comments. A common theme was concern about compliance-based methods being used in the classroom, such as Applied Behaviour Analysis (ABA), and the related harm to students' mental health and long-term capacity for self-advocacy. Compliance-based methods of behaviour management place autistic students at risk of physical, sexual, psychological and financial abuse, and leads to Post Traumatic Stress Symptoms (PTSS) in nearly half of ABA-exposed individuals ([Kupferstein, 2018](#)), and tend to have more severe PTSS. Due to the high volume of important comments throughout the survey, we have attached all comments as an addendum to this submission to ensure that the voice of all survey respondents is included, and strongly encourage you to thoroughly read the attached addendum. Below are two quotes from each type of survey respondent about what they believe school staff need to learn about autism.

Students

“Basic compassion, patience, a willingness to interact with and learn about their students as individuals.”

“Learn about autistic people.”

Parents / Carers

“Self advocacy skills” start with being able to say 'no' and having that respected - very hard for adults in schools to accept this strength-based approaches can work well this all requires much more funding for public schools - current arrangements are generally inadequate all round. Schools are asked to do more and more with less and less.”

“Double empathy problem, it shouldn't be the responsibility of the autistic student to change in order to “fit in”, we don't want to teach neurotypical skills but for autistic social communication skills to be understood and respected.”

School Staff

“Any and all training relative to autism would benefit school staff! There is simply not enough done to provide time for/ to fund this learning by the state education system.”
“There needs to be changes to the curriculum. For speaking and listening, children are marked on making eye contact. This is completely unfair for a large percentage of Autistic children.”

Therapists

“Double empathy! Not making kids be social in a neurotypical way, supporting their own way of playing and helping their students to do the same. Autism in girls!”

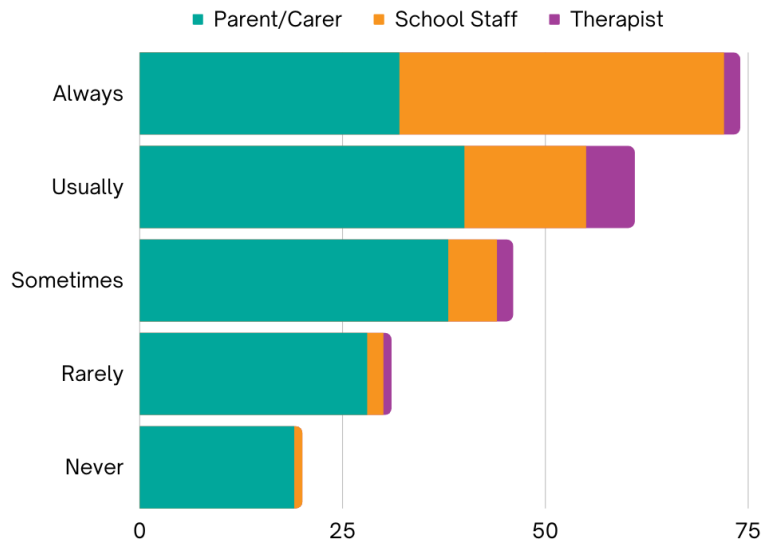
“I am currently enrolled with informed trauma practices with regards to attachment relationships.”

While training about autism is vital in ensuring appropriate support for autistic students in WA is provided, the current support systems are being implemented inconsistently and with varying degrees of success. Public schools are able to access support from the School of Special Education Needs – Disability (SSEND), whereas private schools are not. Further, individual public schools have the freedom to decide whether to invite SSEND staff into the school to support staff and students. Where schools choose not to invite SSEND to the school, there is risk that time-poor school staff are expected to undertake tasks with limited expertise that SSEND could assist with, and risk that outcomes for autistic students may be lower. School staff also report that SSEND are under-resourced, short-staffed, and difficult to access. Some schools refuse to apply for assistance from SSEND, viewing it as a ‘waste of time and resources’ for the school – many of which are likewise under-resourced and short-staffed.

Funding for Education Assistants (EAs) is typically the most common support offered for autistic students within the WA school system. As previously noted, EA funding is not available for students without a formal diagnosis – and with wait times for autism diagnostic assessment now up to four years in duration, the impact on both student learning and school staff trying to support them is very significant. Currently, EA funding for a student with disability is frequently utilised by schools to support other students without an eligible diagnosis who are in need of additional learning support. This practice has serious implications for the students with diagnosed disability, as their learning support needs are not being met. SWAN frequently hear from parents and school staff alike, complaining that the current funding practices for learning support in schools prioritise funds and/or supports for students who may be disruptive in class or who have behavioural issues – to the academic detriment of students with disability who struggle with their learning but may not be disruptive in class.

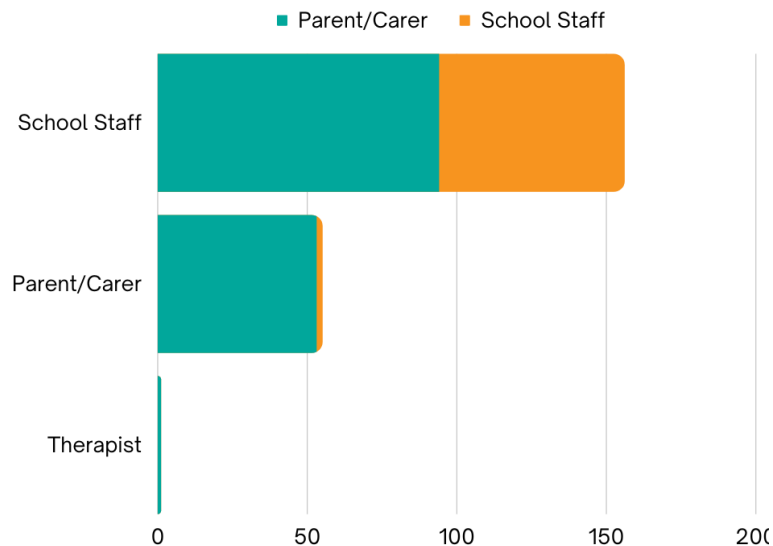
With the exception of Education Assistant (EA) support, the most common practice schools appear to implement to support students who have learning difficulties, is to introduce an Individual Education Plan (IEP), or Curriculum Adjustment Plan (CAP). We asked survey respondents how often IEP’s are developed for autistic students in WA schools. Responses are displayed in the graph on the following page:

How often are IEPs developed?



The 232 survey respondents who answered this question indicated that IEPs are always or usually developed for 58.2% of autistic students, with 22% indicating that IEPs are rarely or never developed for autistic students. We also asked survey respondents about who commences the IEP process, with results displayed in the graph below:

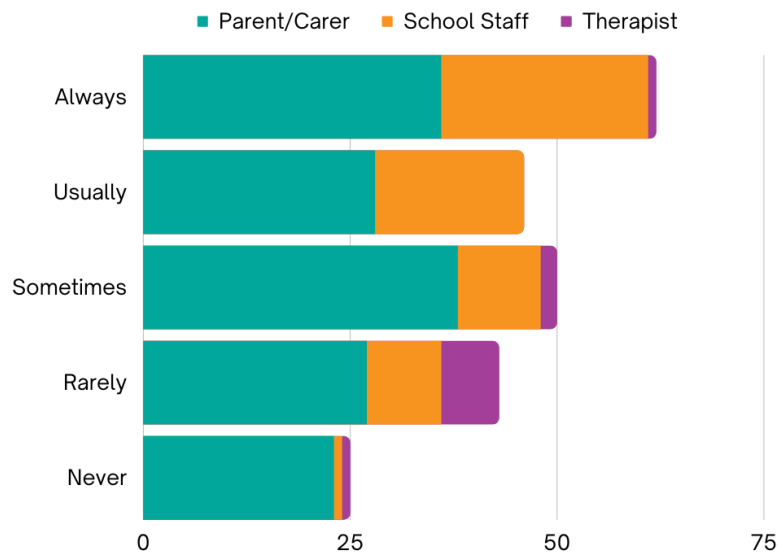
Who starts the IEP process?



The 212 survey respondents who answered this question indicated that school staff start the IEP process 73.5% of the time, with parents / guardians starting the IEP process 25.9% of the time. We note that several parent / guardian respondents also commented that while they had indicated that school staff start the IEP process, this only occurs after the parent / guardian requests one.

We asked survey respondents how often parents / carers (and therapists) are included in the development of an IEP, with results displayed in the graph on the following page:

How often are parents/carers (& therapists) included in IEP development?



The 226 survey respondents who answered this question indicated that parents (and therapists) are always or usually included in the IEP process 47.8% of the time, and rarely or never 30% of the time. We note that according to the [Department of Education WA](#) an IEP ‘...is written specifically for your child to address their academic and personal needs. All staff working with your child at school will use the plan. Your input in the planning process is very important and regular reviews will be conducted to ensure the plan is current and relevant.’ The survey responses indicate that this policy is being implemented inconsistently between schools. Whilst we recognise that some parent/carers may choose not to be involved in the IEP process, all who responded to this survey indicated a desire to be included in the development of their child’s IEP, and 32.9% of parent/carers were rarely or never included in developing their child’s IEP.

We asked survey respondents ‘how well do schools understand IEPs, and how well are they implemented?’ Below are some of the comments from respondents, reflecting huge variation in approach to, management of and implementation of IEPs between schools.

Parents:

“At our current school only (1 of 4, 1 being private, the rest public) this has been done very well mostly, with collaboration between staff and parents. More involvement of EA’s needs to happen. They tend to know the kids better than anyone and are undervalued. Changing goals mid term has been problematic and increased anxiety levels of my PDA anxious autistic child.”

“Do not know at school what IEP & CAP are - my child should have been on IEP for last 5 years as 5 years behind and has been on a CAP. Still fighting to get it changed. No communication from staff - adjustments not being made in classroom, when complain, shut down by learning support. Told I should be doing more for my child at home. Scoffed at when I said I hoped he would pass OLN and graduate.”

“I am pleased that my son’s primary school staff arranges a meeting to discuss the IEP plan. This appears to be working well.”

"I never refer to them during the school term. Only used as a guide.at beginning of term and end. I have no idea how much the teacher applies and implements the plan. At the high school the IEP was good for setting out sensory needs.and.adjustments.in class. Hit a hard spot when asked for headphones with music for regulation purposes in class. Told not allowed to have music inequitable for other kids and too hard for school to manage the other kids desire for music. This was bs but decided not to push it right now. Got to be strategic in how to deal with weaknesses in the Ed system. But school has made other adjustments ear plugs, quiet time, seating arrangements, support in class etc."

"Two of the main goals on my child's IEP, are as follows: expecting my child to demonstrate within 6 weeks, tolerance to uncomfortable sensory situations for up to 3 minutes. For eg: sand in her shoes, wet clothing. Another one is expecting her to make more friends and behave in a way that is more 'socially acceptable', again, asking her to adjust to suit the needs of the teacher rather than the teacher making adjustments to meet the needs of the child with a disability. Would a teacher expect a physically disabled child to wait for 3 minutes before being allowed to access their hearing aid, or wheelchair, if these were necessary to their disability? Would same said child be expected to stand up without a wheelchair or expected to listen without their hearing aid? There are many methods being employed in schools for autistic children, that do not accurately reflect support of their disability and instead seeks to try and change the child. Autism cannot be cured, or changed. It is a neurotype and should be supported as such."

"I think they are put in place and strategies implemented by the teacher but not sure they have the true capacity to vary learning to the individual student in a classroom setting."

"IEP need to be updated on a regular basis. Parents should not be asked to develop behaviour plans. Students need to be at the meetings with parents. I have an email from my child's teacher that says they knew that my child was on a return to school program for one hour a day - but had not realised that this would impact assessment!!!! My child has not passed their units for the last three reporting periods."

"IEPs are often not followed. There are a range of children in classroom environments who are neurodivergent. It is unreasonable to assume that teachers (with the lack of support provided and training) that they would be able to delivered individualised education plans to all the students in the classroom. It is unreasonable and without a change in the staffing and support provided to schools it is not going to change and it is unreasonable to put the pressure onto a teacher to perform under such extreme pressures."

School Staff:

"I work with my teacher to develop an IEP. Based on the IEP I create all resources tailored to that student and a daily routine to ensure students has time to work on their goals, have sensory breaks and is able to be part of the classroom environment. However, this has taken a lot of practice and collaboration with therapists. It also takes a lot of time outside of work hours and it is very difficult as an EA to tailor resources and IEPs to a high needs students at work while supervising the student at the same time. Also, with students with autism, their likes and interests change. Which mean to help them engage in learning activities resources need to be change

often. This is not the case for all students. Some specialist subjects do not give goals as they don't know the student, some EAS don't understand how to tailor work to the student and some teachers do not know how to do IEPs for high needs students so do very basic ones."

"It's a piece of paper to tick a box and pat themselves on the back. Majority of teachers don't refer to them."

"I am at a new school this year, and our SWD coordinator is helping all staff understanding what needs to be done with IEPs. Knowledge and understanding for all staff is constantly improving."

"They aren't implemented that great, a lot of times they are copied and pasted and often or not they aren't updated or accurate."

"The IEPs are often well documented however their success relies heavily on support systems and staffing to be correctly and consistently implemented. This is where the IEP falls apart as if the support are not there or infrequent then the learning does not occur."

"They are implemented by executive staff and teachers. I'm sure most of the EA staff, especially casuals, are unaware they even exist."

"They don't. I have to work with and help class teachers all the time. An example of an IEP goal for a child with selective mutism who never talks in school, was for him to talk."

"We do our best. Often in our own time I am a Learning Area Coordinator. I have 50 students on my case load. I have 1 child with level 3 autism. I work every day till midnight to ensure my caseload is covered. I'm burnt out. Parents do not support the amount of work I do nor do they appreciate the amount of effort we put in. I logged 160hrs of PL in one year (last year) on autism and dld. The workload is insane and I earn under 100000. I have a family, 6 kids, and I do not have time. When are we going to recognise the work that schools actually do?"

Therapists:

"Some schools understand the process of IEPs, the supports (like SSEND) and the ABLEWA curriculum incredibly well and do a great job at implementing. Other schools appear to show minimal understand or willingness to learn."

"In my experience this depends on the experience of the teacher as a whole as well as their experience working with autistic students. Most schools I've worked with aim to review the IEPs each semester. I believe that people do the best they can with the knowledge that they have; in saying that I would love to see more of a shift towards a neurodiverse affirming lens being reflected in IEP goals in the future, for example academic goals suited to the child's interests or social engagement goals centred around the child's enjoyment rather than neurotypical measures of social skills such as greetings or eye contact etc."

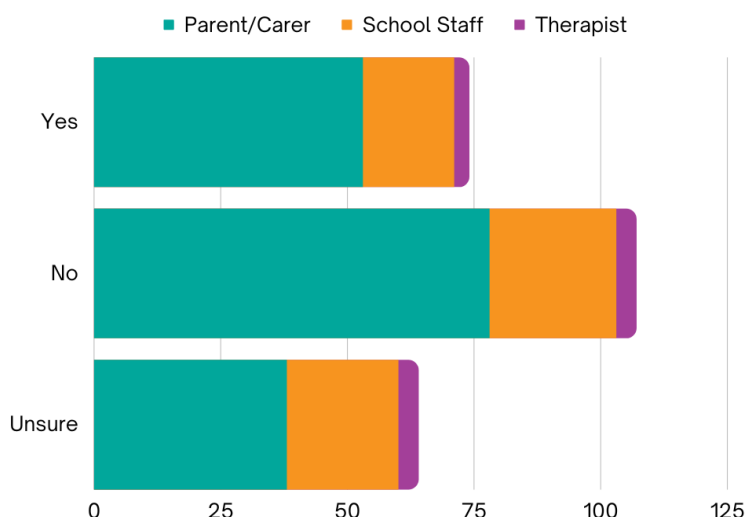
“The planning is excellent, and I believe the intention is there, but lack of support for teachers makes it hard to follow through, especially when some kids have multiple therapy appointments per week that disrupt their learning.”

“If they exist at all, they are generally copied and pasted (often with the previous child’s name still in it) and the content doesn’t practically mean anything... ie the student will be supported to speak up... how... how will the student be supported to speak up???”

“I think they could be better - most are not neuro-affirming either. I don’t feel there is enough follow up on how successful the IEP is being implemented.”

In order to address the Inquiry’s question regarding interaction between State and Commonwealth funded services, we asked survey respondents whether the services that support autistic students, like the NDIS and therapy, work together with the support provided by schools, with responses as shown in the graph below:

Do school NDIS, therapy and school supports work together?



Of the 245 survey respondents who answered this question, 30.2% indicated that these supports do work together collaboratively, with 43.7% advising that they do not. These results confirm a lack of consistency between how different schools approach and manage these supports.

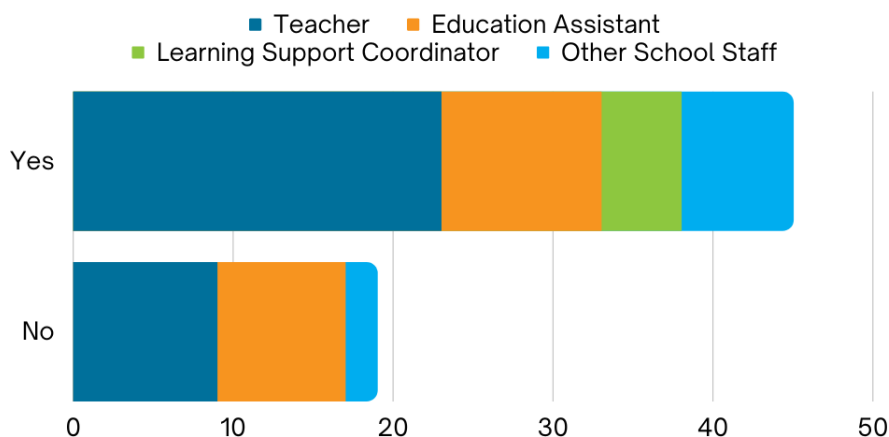
As stated in the Autism CRC’s [Supporting Autistic Children Guideline](#), “Early childhood, primary, and secondary education plays a critical role in the learning, participation and wellbeing of autistic children and their families... emphasise the importance of linking supports and other connections between clinical, community and educational settings.” It is common practice for autistic students who have access to NDIS funding, to receive therapeutic intervention from psychologists, speech pathologists and occupational therapists on a weekly, fortnightly, or monthly basis. In WA, particularly in regional areas, there is very limited access to therapists with extensive wait-times for all therapy providers. Understandably there are extremely limited after school appointment times available, with NDIS-funded autistic students needing to either be withdrawn from school to attend much-needed therapy sessions, or for therapists to travel to the school to provide therapy sessions at school.

Both parents and therapists report significant difficulties in arranging for therapy sessions to occur at school. Some schools have a blanket ban on having therapists on the premises, or implement ‘therapy-free terms’, which impact on the student’s access to NDIS-funded therapies, and can result in losing their place in the service (and returning to the service provider’s waitlist). Some schools do not have a suitable space available for therapy to occur. One therapist reported to SWAN that the room a school allocated for therapy had previously been used for a toilet, with sealed taps and the toilet drain still in-situ. The therapist also reported that they were ‘lucky’ to be able to use that space, having previously attempted to conduct therapy sessions in open spaces at the same school, with other students and staff passing through. Not providing students with a private space is a serious breach of the student’s privacy during therapy sessions.

Other schools implement additional barriers to therapists, such as requiring therapists have an NDIS Worker Screening Check in addition to AHPRA registration, insurances, Working With Children Check and Police Clearances. The requirement of an NDIS Worker Screening Check is quite unreasonable, given that schools are unable to access the NDIS Worker Screening Check database to sight the therapist’s registration, nor are all therapists eligible for an NDIS Worker Screening Check in WA. To apply for one in WA, applicants must enter their employer’s registration number to proceed with the application – despite both the NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission promoting widely that anyone wanting to work in the disability sector should apply for an NDIS Worker Screening Check, and the fact that only employees of NDIS registered providers are legally required to have an NDIS Worker Screening Check.

In order to understand the current supports for autistic students in WA schools, it is important to gather information about current complaints processes and how well they are managed. To ensure continuous improvement and quality of support, complaints need to be appropriately reported on, responded to, and learned from. We asked school staff if they would feel confident to make a complaint about support for autistic students in WA schools, and the responses are detailed in the graph below:

Would you feel confident to make a complaint about support for autistic students in WA schools?



Whilst it’s pleasing to see that 70.3% of the 64 education staff who answered this question would feel confident to make a complaint about support for autistic students in their school, 29.7% indicated that they would not. This indicates that almost one third of schools do not

provide safe, accessible complaints processes for their staff. Several staff also told us that they have previously made complaints about treatment of autistic students by staff in their school, and were threatened with disciplinary action, as evidenced in the comments below:

“I have made complaints to management and nothing generally gets changed.”

“Admin/ ASD program staff do not appreciate EAs questioning their judgement in many cases. On one occasion the Deputy warned me that I would be in breach of the Code of Conduct if I was to question the teacher’s discipline of a student.”

“I have advocated for students in the past and I was seen as a trouble maker and effectively pushed out of the school.”

“I wouldn’t [complain] because I don’t feel confident that anything would change if I complained.”

“There is no-one to complain to, they fall on deaf ears.”

“To whom? And supported by whom?”

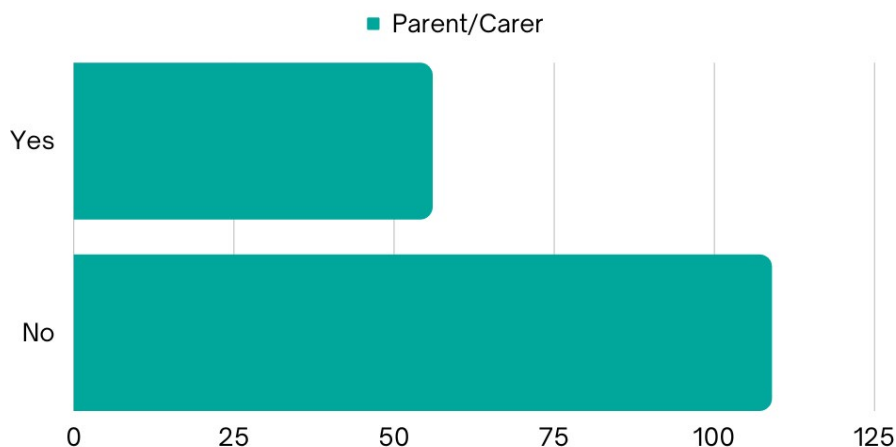
“There is no support. Making a complaint adds to the workload of a colleague who is already swamped.”

“What can be done? We need smaller class sizes, more funding for more support staff- in my class of 20 children, I have 4 with autism- only 3 are formally diagnosed, 2 with other special needs, another 3 with developmental delays and another 2 with severe behaviour problems. This is a MAINSTREAM class. Teachers are overwhelmed and we cannot juggle this many complex needs. I can’t even get to look at my poor kids who are high achievers or my students who are ESL.”

“Who do I complain to? They would say ‘It’s your job’.”

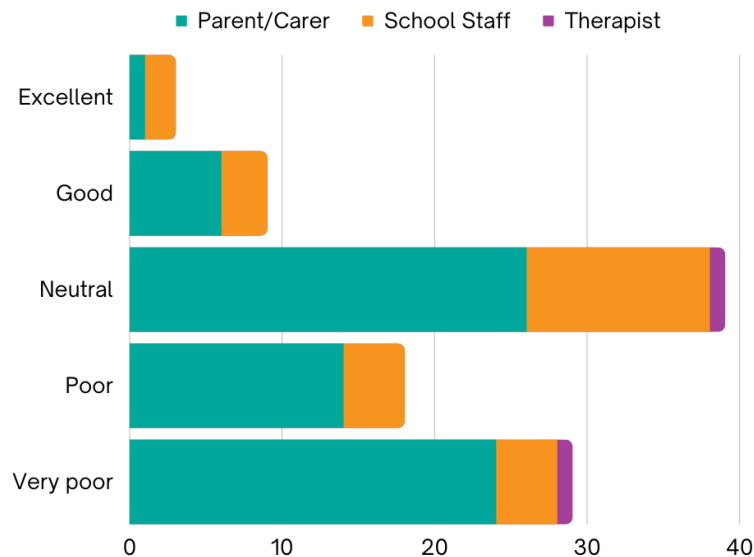
We also asked parent/carers if they knew how to make a complaint about support for autistic students in WA schools, with a concerning 66.1% of the 165 who responded to this question advising that they don’t know how to make a complaint, as can be seen in the graph below:

Do you know how to make a complaint about support for autistic students in WA schools?



How well complaints are managed is also important to ascertain. We asked survey respondents who have lodged a complaint about support for autistic students in WA schools to rate how well their complaint was managed. As can be seen in the graph below, 11.6% of the 95 survey respondents who answered this question rated handling of their complaint as excellent or good, whereas almost half (48.4%) rated handling of their complaint as poor or very poor.

How well was your complaint handled?



We received a high volume of comments about how schools handle complaints in our survey, and strongly encourage you to read all the comments regarding this issue in the attached addendum. Below are some of the comments made by survey respondents:

Parents:

“Had to change schools. It was horrific and traumatising.”

“I found it just went around in circles. Been at many different schools with 3 autistic kids, can depend on principle and who’s coordinator I pulled my son out year 8 as coordinator was terrible and couldn’t get to principle Next year a different coordinator was for his year level and a new principle came. I received an apology from both as my son was mistreated so badly by teachers and staff they worked hard to provide supports for him and teachers involved in the previous year were given warnings that they had to follow IEP. He is now at a different high school they have been amazing with communication staff all get along with him and don’t put him down. as for my youngest I gave up advocating as was just too exhausting for me as we changed a few primary schools but as was with covid time and so many relief teachers and relief EAs communication was too poor and she is much higher needs but also masks so EAs say she had a great day yet she would be a mess the rest of the day at home and in total overwhelm and they expected her to ask for help no matter how many times me and her therapist said she is incapable of asking we spent two years of her therapy trying different ways to help her to ask . But part of her disability is she can’t ask for help.”

"It's all very well to make the complaint, but if nothing is done about constant bullying, and no safe place for a child to go in order to get away from it, then school is just a really bad place for an autistic child."

"The regional office dealt with it, however very little change was made by the actual school."

"I witnessed a teacher drag a disabled 5yr old child out of the classroom by his arm (his feet weren't touching the ground) screaming at him that no one wanted him anywhere near them. I spoke to the Principal the following day, and was told to expect the cold shoulder from the staff. None of the staff ever spoke to me again. Our kids began screaming and crying each day on the way to school. We had to withdraw and move them to a different school. It was appalling."

"Principal was supportive in the end but I shouldn't of had to escalate."

"We had a phone call to check that we were happy with our choice to homeschool, I said no it wasn't a choice and I am not happy that the education department cannot provide my children with suitable education. They did nothing further."

"It's just swept under the carpet there is zero change and zero accountability."

"We have had big issues recently and complained to the Education dept. The person involved was encouraged to retire but he'd done the same thing with kids with additional needs before. They need to make people accountable instead of trying to keep it all confidential. We have resubmitted our complaint as not satisfied."

"Never acted upon by principal and district office - Only acted upon when sent to the Director of Education."

School Staff:

"[Very poor] In part due to the Principal not being totally honest in the process."

"My school recognised I needed more support in the classroom and arranged for an EA to be available full times as well as an extra duty person to 'shadow' at break times."

"Threatened with disciplinary action."

"I have made complaints to management and nothing generally gets changed."

Therapist

"Nothing was done in regard to blocking my visit to schools. I was told it was the Principal's decision."

In seeking feedback from people across the state, we obtained responses from people in metropolitan, rural, regional, and remote areas. The feedback was generally consistent across the board, regardless of location – reflecting a clear lack of consistency in the approach to supporting autistic students and their families from one school to the next. It is important to note, however, that the number of available supports in rural, regional and remote areas are significantly less than what is available in the metropolitan area, with longer wait times to access these services.

Currently autistic students are subject to ‘geographic lottery’ in trying to access appropriate support in school. A student living on one side of the street may reside in the catchment for a school offering an inclusive, supportive, and flexible learning environment; while a student living across the road may reside in the catchment for a different school providing an inflexible, unsupportive, and sometimes discriminatory learning environment.

SWAN staff consistently hear teachers report that when they have implemented strategies in the classroom to address the needs of neurodivergent students, all students in the classroom benefit from these reasonable adjustments. The typical WA classroom environment is a sensory nightmare for neurodivergent students, and this was reflected in many comments from survey respondents. With fluorescent lighting, lack of air conditioning (many neurodivergent students have difficulties with temperature regulation), group seating structures, background noise, preference for verbal communication and lack of sensory and movement breaks, the classroom environment is overwhelming and triggering for neurodivergent students. This results in reduced academic achievement, shutdowns / meltdowns, and behavioural difficulties. By ensuring that the classroom strategies utilised in all WA schools are neurodiversity-affirming, it’s clear that all WA students will benefit.

Recommendations

- 1) Develop a Working Group consisting of autistic adults, Disabled Persons and Families Organisations (DPFOs), Allied Health Professionals, Education Professionals and representatives from the [Autism CRC](#) to co-produce a mandatory, fully funded autism training program for all school staff (inclusive of Administration personnel) in Western Australia.
- 2) The Western Australian Government to allocate funding and resources:
 - a) for all students experiencing difficulties in their learning, without requirement of a formal diagnosis of disability.
 - b) specifically to support the individual needs of the student for whom the funding has been allocated (rather than to support other students not eligible for funding who may be disruptive in class).
 - c) provision of an Education Assistant (EA) in each classroom to support the learning of all students; with a separate EA (or more as needed) to support eligible students with disability. We note that this would create the bonus effects of reducing stigma for students with disability, and reduce staff burnout and exit from education.
- 3) Requirement that all University institutions include a minimum of one mandatory course unit on disability and autism to be completed by all undergraduate Education students.
- 4) The Western Australian Government to increase funding allocation to the School of Special Education Needs – Disability (SEND), and implement a minimum of one visit

per school term to each public school in Western Australia in order to support school staff to appropriately support students with disability attending the school, and monitor the progress of schools in supporting individual students. Adequate time must be allocated based on the number of students with disability attending each school, and the complexity of their individual needs.

- 5) The Western Australian Government to create and fund staff within the Department of Education dedicated to performing the role of access and inclusion monitoring and audit of all schools. These auditors would be tasked with the role of ensuring that minimum support standards for students with disability are implemented consistently across all WA schools, with observation, training, ongoing monitoring, feedback from students, families and the wider community, and imposing sanctions and retraining on schools who fail to meet the minimum standard. Further, schools providing support for students with disability to a high standard should be recognised and awarded.
- 6) The Western Australian Government to invest in infrastructure throughout WA schools to enable smaller class sizes (maximum appropriate class sizes to be determined by the Working Group mentioned in recommendation #1), in addition to ensuring each school premises include a minimum of:
 - a) one accessible sensory space for students experiencing overwhelm and related distress.
 - b) one room allocated for students with disability to engage in therapy sessions to support their skill development.

Note: Where individual schools have high numbers of autistic students or students with multiple disabilities; or school premises consist of both primary and secondary school students, a minimum of two of each type of room is required.
- 7) The Education Department of WA to implement minimum standards of support for autistic students (and all students with disability), with ongoing monitoring of outcomes for students with disability and audits of school performance in support provision (including consideration of feedback from parents/guardians and the students themselves).
- 8) On recommendations from the Working Group mentioned in recommendation #1, all public school classroom environments be upgraded in consideration of the sensory and learning needs of neurodiverse students (e.g. incorporation of visual strategies in class lessons, retrofitting rooms with dimmable LED downlights, noise reduction strategies and air conditioning).
- 9) The Education Department of WA to instruct all schools in WA to immediately cease punishment strategies for 'poor attendance' of students with disability (e.g., Withholding Keys4Life certification, disallowing participation in end of term reward activities.). This policy actively discriminates against students with disability, many of whom struggle with maintaining school attendance due to insufficient supports to meet their needs, seriously impacting their physical and mental health; absences to attend medical and therapy appointments; and other medical issues impacting their health. Further, it is inappropriate to punish students for poor attendance during an ongoing, highly infectious pandemic.
- 10) The Education Department of WA commit to improving complaints processes by ensuring that all:

- a) staff are aware of and have access to an anonymous complaints process without fear of repercussions;
- b) public schools in WA prominently display complaint processes on premises, on their website and in information provided to families;
- c) public school administration staff are trained in appropriate, responsive and empathetic complaint handling processes;
- d) schools implement continuous improvement processes, seeking feedback from staff, students, families and community about their support systems, and work to address issues of concern raised;
- e) staff, students and families are offered and able to access free, independent support and advocacy to make complaints, and mediation support where needed; and
- f) Staff, students and families are offered and able to access free, independent complaints processes without fear of reprisal.

11) The Western Australian Government to advocate to the Commonwealth Government for Medicare rebate for autism diagnostic assessment to be available on referral from a General Practitioner, rather than Paediatrician or Psychiatrist.

Conclusion

The currently available supports for autistic students in WA schools are highly inconsistent, and largely ineffective; at great cost to autistic students, families and school staff. The recommendations above describe the urgently needed and long-awaited changes to address the problems in the current system of supports, in order to ensure equity, access and best practice in supporting autistic students in WA schools. Implementing these recommendations would significantly improve outcomes for autistic students, as well as improving school culture and the learning experience for neurotypical (non-autistic) students. We strongly believe that these recommendations would also significantly reduce education staff burnout and the number of school staff existing teaching.

As the peak body supporting autistic people in the south west region of WA and beyond, we would be happy to discuss the issues further with the Members conducting the Inquiry. It is very clear that autistic students, their parents and carers, schools, teachers, and their education assistants want and **need** more support in the school environment, higher quality of support, consistency and accountability. Thank you for investigating these issues. Investment in support for autistic children and young people in schools is an investment into the future of all Australians.

Further Information

- Please see attached Addendum detailing all comments made by survey respondents.
- The data from all graphs can be provided in table format on request.

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Addendum

**SWAN Submission to the WA
Education & Health Standing
Committee Inquiry into support for
autistic children and young people in
WA schools**

Survey Respondent Comments in Full



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Based on your experience, please rate how available support for autistic students is in WA schools (other comments)

Students

- Support may be easier than I know of to access but my autism makes it incredibly hard for me to ask for things, especially help. If information about accessing support was more readily available I'd feel more comfortable.
- I was frequently dismissed by teachers when I tried to seek help, to the extent I learned to stop trying to get help.

Parents / Carers

- Apart from those high schools that have Autism Specialist Learning Program.
- At [REDACTED] they have a great support for Autistic Students and work closely with parents / carers.
- Basic understanding of autism and the individualised nature of support needs of each child or really lacking.
- CEWA Disability Officer refused sensory supports for my child in the classroom. I've had to bring in an advocate.
- Depending on the teacher or teacher in charge.
- EA time is scarce and insufficient. There is no safe space for children to go within the school when they are feeling overwhelmed or require support. They are not able to access the school psychologist for support.
- EA's support my child in class though forced eye contact, give too many verbal prompts and do not listen to my child when they ask the EA's to back off and leave them alone because they are feeling overwhelmed. I have been trying to get a PBS Practitioner to come to the school and advocate for my child's needs because the teachers aren't listening to me.
- Expectations are so unrealistic, punishment and consequences are used to try to 'fix' the ASD. Not enough funding to get the relevant support required.
- Girl high masking is seen as fine so minimal support given yet internally struggling.
- I feel that my Autistic son would benefit if his allocated EA stayed with him all day instead of leaving him to support other children.
- I feel the support she receives is because I work within the school.
- I have 2 autistic children who need support to access the curriculum and learning opportunities. My 6 year old is able to camouflage their autistic features, she tells me "I keep it hidden so the teachers don't get mad at me". As a result, she is not disruptive in class, but she suffers a lot. She self harms in class - coming home with bleeding sores all over her arms and legs - her psychologist has explained that this is from anxiety that leads to picking her skin to self-soothe. In spite of me and the psychologist raising this with her teacher multiple times, she gets minimal support - she gets one "brain break" per day where an EA takes her out of the classroom for 20 minutes to walk around the school grounds, which is a much needed respite that my child looks forward to. She doesn't even get this reliably every day. She is seeing a psychologist to deal with the trauma of being in an unsupportive school environment.
- I have not been offered any support for my 8 yr old autistic son. I have had to go looking for support, and it has taken 18 months for something to be done correctly.
- I have one child recently diagnosed as being autistic at the age of 13. There was no support for her at her school without a formal diagnosis which due to lengthy waiting lists took 12 months. She was sitting in the student services area experiencing high levels of anxiety alongside children with behaviour problems that heightened her levels of anxiety. She was accepted into a Specialist Learning Program at another high school this term and the change in her is amazing. She said that she feels supported, safe and listened

to at her new school. I think that the experience at her former high school is more the norm and if we hadn't have been successful in getting her into the specialist program we would be having to look at home schooling or distance learning which we didn't feel comfortable with.

- I love the teachers and EAs at the school I find the funding inadequate to assist my child reach success For example - attending work experience through schools- no EA to attend with child which makes the experience a no win- my child has many reports explaining issues and requires support but no available.
- I think more training for teacher and aids on Autism and small classes size 20-25 kids
- I was told last week that he needs to go somewhere else.
- If you live outside the metro area, then don't bother.
- If you're lucky to get a good teacher it is ok, but besides that schools are poorly equipped and are neurotypical centred.
- Inconsistent delivery of reasonable accommodations Knowledge gaps in leadership and teaching staff.
- Is this is meaning just the availability of supports?
- It takes a long time to get confirmed diagnosis and EA used to assist other kids with no diagnosis or a condition that doesn't attract diagnosis like Sensory Processing Disorder.
- It varies between schools. 1 school there is no support provided at all for 17yo and never has been even with her diagnosis and school will not communicate with us at all even after multiple calls and emails.
- It's hit and miss - we've had amazing experiences in public mainstream (and abysmal experiences) - there seems to be inconsistent approaches depending on school and staff. I had to pull one child from a mainstream school due to intense bullying the school refused to deal with (it went as far as strangulation during class and destruction of property). In complete opposition- support at another school has been phenomenal.
- Lack of access to support within the classroom.
- Lack of knowledge on the spectrum and differences of autistic children and their needs
- Lack of staff means extra help is often not available.
- Learning coordinator at the high school is excellent. Ed support staff have been amazing at the primary school.
- Little to no support, communication gets ignored unless it's a request from the school.
- Minimal support available for the quiet shy under the radar kids.
- My child has got to lots of main stream school the support is zero.
- My daughter doesn't openly show her struggles like most autistic boys do so even though she is diagnosed, the support is not there for her.
- My daughter is currently not attending due to lack of school support and resources however still currently enrolled.
- My son is in year 11. While he is funded to have an EA in some of his classes, the school curriculum does not adequately cater for the way autistic brains think. He is left sitting in classes (such as General English or Essential Maths) that have a curriculum that does not cater for his Specific Learning Disorder (written expression) or the different way his brain thinks into account and there are no modified exams allowed. So he is left being an intelligent boy who regularly gets scores of 30% - 0%. This impacts self esteem, self concept, motivation and engagement. It is a lonely and isolating experience to feel that you are there in class but not really seen or heard.
- New to support but have found VERY dependent on school in terms of recognition prior to diagnosis.
- None available.
- Not enough funding for aides in either primary or high school. Not enough training for teachers.
- Not enough funding used on their actual learning needs and social support.
- Not enough trained EAs and multiple kids sharing an assistant.

- On paper great, in practice terrible.
- Only my 2x boys have received support from an EA to remain in school and to co-regulate. My daughter, identified at 9yrs, has had little to no support. Only this year as an 11yr old, have I seen tailored approaches to her learning and ability to regulate put into place. I have had to work really hard for the last 7yrs for this to happen. Sadly, girls fall through the cracks and schools simply don't have the knowledge to support these students adequately.
- Our primary school was amazing [REDACTED], but high school terrible.
- Our school has a full time psychologist, however she has not supported our son at all this year. Even though my son has a provisional diagnosis, neither his classroom teacher nor the special needs EA have appropriate training to support my son.
- Our school is small by design so we have additional experienced staff in each classroom.
- Primary support is more available than high school, although they are not trained specifically in autism. Some EAs know little about ASD and most of the time EA support is spread over multiple students with the higher needs students receiving most support and lower needs receiving next to nothing. Even though the lower needs students have funding and would benefit from social and emotional support to support emotional development and enable student to feel at ease during the day and limit meltdowns once home. This is due to Ed Dept funding and students with high needs and no funding, ie: no diagnosis, trauma, ADHD which attracts no funding, diabetes, which attracts limited funding, and learning difficulties without diagnosis.
- Required to fiercely advocate for every adjustment.
- Room for improvement.
- School believes it is supporting student, but staff have too little knowledge on his needs and do not alter their pedagogy to suit his needs and abilities. In fact some staff have altered the content they deliver to him by dumbing it down, even though he is extremely bright with a very high IQ.
- Schools - only outdated behaviour management support available.
- Schools are really lacking the help for autistic kids in WA schools.
- Staff, including Eas have no ASD awareness training.
- Support is incredibly variable (between poor to fair on the scale) dependent on the school the student is attending. My son has attended 4 different primary schools, catholic, Christian, public education support and mainstream public. All offered various levels of support from poor to fair.
- Support is very much based on how "disabled teacher feels your child is. My daughter is Level 2 ASD with a hearing impairment, anxiety and learning difficulties. However because she is verbal, can perform basic toileting tasks and masks (is obedient and compliant as they put it) her regulatory and educational needs are regularly not supported, with non-verbal children monopolising EAs in the school, and my child is suffering due to inadequate funding for sufficient EAs to support all additional needs children.
- Support received is often based on very outdated "traditional" autism traits - there is little comprehension of how autism can present differently in different children. Little knowledge of the co-morbidity diagnosis that often affect children with ASD such as anxiety or ADHD.
- Support staff and teachers rarely get Professional Learning even when they want it. Schools aren't spending in this area.
- Supports were not appropriately and consistently available which was detrimental to the child. This was in 2020.
- Teachers can't identify Autistic children and see them as disruptive and naughty. Teachers don't know how to work with Autistic children. Autistic children are being denied basic rights in the school environment and lack of space and facilities are causing our children anxiety along with the inflexible learning styles.

- Teachers need more education in special needs. OT social worker and psychologist support also needed. More funding and P&C representation.
- The lack of EA support was terrible.
- There is a general lack of knowledge and support of the vast range of Autism.
- There is a lack of child focused, trauma informed inclusive and flexible education options which support autistic children and youths education and learning particularly in their varied areas of interest and ability.
- There needs to be more education for teachers in acceptability of autism and ADHD and teachers need more support to support those students. Smaller / specialised classrooms would help.
- There was almost no help available to maintain placement in mainstream. We were basically forced to transfer to Ed support. As soon as he had a diagnosis the school had no interest in continuing to support him and set him up to fail.
- They receive very little EA time or support.
- This is based on a standard mainstream school with no special learning program in place.
- This is why we pay for private school.
- [REDACTED] has been extremely accommodating.
- Very limited special ed units in the northern corridor near Yanchep Two Rocks, for low functioning children with autism.
- We are very lucky that our kids get support as the school actually pays the extra for them to get the extra time they need. They should not have to have 2 in primary school who need full time EA but because they aren't blind or deaf they are not entitled to it.
- We had a poor experience at one public primary and had a cross border application accepted for another school which has been amazing.
- We have an amazing school with staff who are fully understanding but lack skills or time to fully support our sons education/learning. Thankfully the class sizes are small and adjustments can be made.
- We have supportive teachers which is wonderful. However extra resources are not available to the school until diagnosis, which currently takes up to 2 years with waiting lists, a huge gap in extra support.
- While there are educational concessions for my child, PD for teaching staff is severely lacking meaning that items on IEP's are not fully understood/followed/delivered in the school setting.
- You have to push extremely hard as a parent to get supports for your child and the supports available are not necessarily of the standard hoped for. Teachers are not given enough resources to accommodate the challenges faced by children with Autism in mainstream schools and the physical environments of the classrooms can be confrontational to children with sensory challenges.
- You need \$ to be able to afford the diagnosis from the "correct" health professionals - counselling psychologist and speech pathologist not considered good enough for AISWA to provide my daughter's school with funding to support her.
- Your system is broken. Children that are autistic and have language challenges need consistent exposure to their language system for them to learn just like any language, no one uses AAC properly even in education support settings and now you want to cut those models? Broken very broken.
- I feel the answer varies depending on the specific support; some are well developed and accessible, other types of support are completely overlooked limiting equitable access to education for all neurodiverse/ students with additional needs.

School Staff

- Availability of supports for autistic students in WA extremely poor and at times scarce or non-existent.

- But depends on the student.
- Due to the training i have maintained the student i work with has been fantastically supported. However, I help other autistic students from different classes when the need to be supported and at times, due to multiple reasons such as the lack of funding or education some students don't have the same access to support.
- I have been able to access specific high-level support for teaching and learning as well as behaviour through SEN, the visiting teachers are wonderful. However, for longer lasting support there is very little available if the student is not on NDIS or has supportive parents. As students get older and more independent, the amount of EA time decreases but they still need regular one-on-one support for social and emotional learning - this is what is missing.
- Insufficient funds and appropriate environments in private schools except the specialised learning program which should be replicated in all schools. Insufficient availability for training. Mainstream Teachers overwhelmed and overloaded.
- Long wait times for appointments.
- Massive wait lists to even get a diagnosis in the first place!
- Much better for younger children, less effective for secondary school children.
- No extra support from the school. Diagnosed Child is in Pre-Primary and is 5 and may only attend 2 hours a day!!!
- Not enough staff.
- Not fit for purpose.
- Not good enough.
- Once a child is diagnosed, finding for support become available. Getting a child diagnosed is a very long process due to specialist wait times.
- Our school has a great reputation for supporting our special needs students.
- SSEN online is my 'go to' resource. I only am in regular contact with therapists employed through Outloud (NDIS funded).
- Staff are not trained on Autism, even those who have Autistic children in their class for the whole year. They have unrealistic expectations and this causes strain for all parties involved. Staff need more training and more support in the classroom to cater better for neurodiverse minds.
- Students are supported by Education Assistants, however in high school the students have many subjects when they are not supported. I teach Home Economics (both Food & Textiles) to year 7 & 8 students and have EA support in one of my two year 7 classes, despite having autistic students in both year groups. EA support is extremely limited and is prioritised to MESH subjects. However, I believe autistic students would benefit from having EA support in practical/hands-on subjects.
- teachers and support workers don't have the knowledge or skills to work with children with additional needs.
- The wait times for diagnosis is also very poor. There are also families without reliable transport to even travel to see specialists.
- Too many kids who don't meet criteria for support - they need the same support as kids who 'tick the boxes'.
- We have students who are funded through Autism WA, some have a one-to-one EA depending on funding, diagnosis wait lists are very long.

Therapists

- Lack of education assistant support across all types of schools.
- Support for students in private schools is almost non existent, most students at private schools don't have access to EAs in the classroom at all. In public schools, students might not have enough hours of allocated EA time unless other autistic students are grouped together to provide a full time EA. There is also no support for kids with ADHD who often have as hard a time.

- The support is inconsistent and guidelines on how schools and families access support are unclear.

Based on your experience, please rate the quality of support for autistic students in WA schools (other comments).

Students

- I am mid process of getting support but due to me not having all my diagnosis information I cannot get any yet.

Parents / Carers

- Access to diagnostic systems. Lack of staff in these roles. Long waiting list.
- Again, this is based on a standard mainstream school with no special learning program in place.
- Although I have found the current teacher we have accepting of our child with Autism it is not throughout the entire school or when our son goes to another teacher for a specific learning area e.g. he has a different teacher for music/sport/health etc. The quality of care vastly changes. He provides funding but it is still not enough for him to be able to achieve.
- At [REDACTED] they have a great support system in place for Autism Students and work closely with parents / carers.
- Better in primary school than highschool.
- Constant bullying and no safe place to go to ie: the Library.
- Curriculum is the same for “normal” students.
- EAs and teaching staff needs to have ASD specific training to understand the autistic mind.
- Ed support has been great for him but doesn't provide the academic challenge he could be capable of. There is a complete lack of support in mainstream so that it just isn't an option.
- Education of teaching staff about disability and adjustments is poor which leads to Unconscious bias, and discrimination. Always blame the child for teaching failures.
- Everyone is under the pump so unable to give the required attention.
- Extremely poor and in this particular school was the deputies that were not happy to allow appropriate accommodations for the child and unwilling to support the teachers appropriately too. This was even refused after being advised by the child's specialist team.
- Good on average. Occasionally poor and sometimes excellent.
- Highly variable!
- I have had to follow up multiple times over the last 18 months, to ensure a suitable SEN plan (apparently the equivalent to an IEP) has been put together to allow my son progress in his education.
- It depends on the staff, their knowledge and their ability to connect with the children. What children are in the class also has a major impact.
- It varies so much with schools and they are heavily underfunded. We have 1 school that provides great support, another that provides none, and a previous school that expected other students to care for our child instead of staff. Or staff disclosing information about children to the community and other parents and telling people they treat the autistic children like their dogs. Privacy isn't maintained in remote schools.
- It's a struggle! At one school the teacher went above and beyond to get to know our child, the next teacher was already 'an expert' so did what they thought best without learning from the previous teacher, us or the child; at current school skills and knowledge of teachers is still patchy and varies from class to class and across specialist teachers; we

do have a consistent learning support team from year to year who endeavour to carry the knowledge about the child and distribute to all staff but it's still a struggle.

- Its ok.
- Lack of communication and blame/shaming parents. Lots of paperwork and plans but no actual help. Even minor difficulties are poorly managed and autistic child is sent home.
- Lack of training and limited resources.
- Most schools will not adapt to a child but expect the child to adapt and if / when this results in challenging behaviours they respond in ways that ultimately result in children dropping out of the school system or being home schooled which places severe strain on their home situations and on the public purse.
- My child has been bullied at school and online and the response from the school is that I should remove my child and send them to an alternative school. I believe this is because my child's attendance record reflects poorly on the school.
- My child has been diagnosed with PDA a profile of autism. We have found most school support staff a little to no knowledge of how to support students with this subset of autism.
- My older autistic child is 9. I requested disability adjustments to be put on an IEP 4 months ago. The school has declined to sign off on any of them and has not given me any reason for declining to implement them. I have tried explaining to the school that there is legislation (the DSE 2005) that says they shouldn't just refuse disability adjustments requested by my child's health professionals, they need to actually weigh up the risks and benefits and consult with me about it. My child has been repeatedly bullied - other students have threatened to "break" him for stimming (tapping his fingers on his desk to help himself stay calm), in front of his classroom teacher. He said this made him really scared, but he can't not stim because it calms him down. His OT and psychologist have explained that stimming is necessary and good for his emotional regulation, so I don't see why he should have to be afraid of doing it in the classroom. My child was also called "a pest" in front of his classmates when he asked a relief teacher for help to understand instructions.
- Need more awareness and training across the board from Principals to EAs and SEND support staff.
- No help for her she just feels dumb.
- No quiet spaces, lack of trained staff, and flexibility with schedules.
- None available.
- Not enough funding for things like sensory spaces, not enough funding for aides.
- Not enough trained EAs or time allocated.
- Not including those high schools with an Autism Specialist Learning Program.
- Now .. it took a while for the school to get on board to do the right thing by kids with Autism.
- Other students that don't have allocated funding get more support than my child who has a diagnosis and funding.
- Our current school is absolutely shocking!
- PP, Year 1 and 2 teachers cared. Year 3 EA and teacher do not want my child in the class.
- Prior to diagnosis, my son attended Kindergarten at a public school that had resulted in ongoing trauma. My son was punished on a daily basis through a 'sit and think' chair due to situations that triggered him. We requested support from the teacher and deputy on multiple occasions and nothing was done until I lodged a formal complaint with the principal.
- Restrictive practices are too common. My child has been restrained hundreds of times and isolated in PIR probably hundreds of times (more often than I was told, that's for certain).
- School believes it is supporting student, but staff have too little knowledge on his needs and do not alter their pedagogy to suit his needs and abilities. In fact some staff have

altered the content they deliver to him by dumbing it down, even though he is extremely bright with a very high IQ.

- Schools relying on outdated ABA models that don't keep up with neuroscience or lived experience neuro-affirming research and evidence.
- See above comment.
- Social, emotional and sensory needs are ignored. Only behaviours get attention.
- Sometimes children are well supported in some schools. Other schools chose to put their funding elsewhere and special needs students are not well supported or getting the support their funding or level should get. As schools have total control of spending, some support well while others chose to spend on something else.
- Sounds like things may be better in public schools than in private.
- Teachers and assistance have a poor understanding of autism.
- Teachers do not understand the needs for predictable and safe working environment to ensure equal access to learning.
- Teachers don't recognise need for support for autistic girls who are high masking.
- The EAs we now have are great. But it took a lot of effort to get the right support.
- The education system is in bad enough shape with too many students in each class and teachers that are overworked and overwhelmed. The government isn't fixing these basics and then on top of that, a large proportion of autistic students go through their whole school life, despite being intelligent with so much to offer, not achieving "success" or meeting their potential. My son has not really received an education that he can access. His focus has been on blending in, building a thick skin and surviving one year after another.
- The exclusion process is discriminatory especially when behaviours are triggered by incompetent staff not following behaviour plans.
- The quality of services provided to enable adequate support on an educational level is lacking. The ability to address learning challenges as well as the social, emotional and regulatory challenges these children face is lacking. Teachers require more support and schools should consider the inclusion of supportive therapists such as OTs, Speech pathologists and psychologists in their staffing configuration.
- The school and curriculum structure and is not neuro-affirming or flexible. There are virtually no supports available on an as needed basis for autistic children on campus.
- There is no support. The schools decide how they spend the funding and my child is lucky to get any one on one EA support.
- They didn't even diagnosed my son, even after eight years of attending it.
- They have individual plans put in place but have found teachers EAs don't follow them. At times have refused to accommodate or provide what is on IEP.
- Untrained and lack of staff available.
- Very little support in school - throwing a token "sensory space" in the corner of a room for a child with ASD has been my experience.
- We are fortunate to have supportive teachers who have made allowances such as creating a sensory corner.
- We are struggling to get our daughter to school - the school doesn't appear to care at all.
- We are very lucky that our kids get support as the school actually pays the extra for them to get the extra time they need. They should not have to have 2 in primary school who need full time EA but because they aren't blind or deaf they are not entitled to it.
- We have changed primary schools 4 times in 6 years. Some are doing better than others. There's always room for improvements.
- We have had the opportunity to be in an Ed support school, I don't think we would cope in a mainstream public school.
- Why are so many ASD/PDA students home schooled.
- Your autistic child needs to be level 3 or above for any aide time. Staff are not equipped to further a student's education.

- I feel the answer varies depending on the specific support; some are well developed and accessible, other types of support are completely overlooked limiting equitable access to education for all neurodiverse/ students with additional needs

School Staff

- Again, the team at SSEN and Outloud therapists are amazing.
- At our school, support is good. It's varied between schools though.
- Both teaching staff and EA staff aim to provide both academic and social supports for students.
- Don't know about other schools?
- EAs and most teachers are supportive however some teachers are unsupportive and try to force autistic students to "act normal".
- I have seen the full range from brilliant to terrible. Secondary teachers are generally worse than primary teachers at being truly inclusive and providing quality differentiation.
- It depends on the individual school. I can only comment on the school I work at.
- Many teachers have little exposure to any disabilities, should be more done in training.
- More educational is needed.
- More funding for EAs and in school therapists.
- Poor at ADMIN level. Eas supporting too many students, poor continuity and consistency.
- See above - SEN is great. Outside OT/speech etc is great but just not available.
- Stupidly phrased question. I can only answer for the school in which I work. Our EAs are excellent, but we don't have enough of them. I am trying to learn how to support autistic kids, but my time and resources are limited.
- Support for Autistic young people in Educational Support Centres is good. Schools need more funding and staff require more training in the social emotional model of Autism to better support emotional regulation, using common language and communication styles eg: declarative language. Regular inductions on behaviour management and professional development in order to understand the needs of these amazing young Autistic people.
- Very little support.
- When it is available, it can be great. It's the getting it that is the hard part!

Therapists

- I see many schools doing wonderful things and then nothing in place at other schools. It appears that there is no ruling on what good support is or how to provide it and no repercussions if a standard is not met.
- Many school staff still see autistic meltdown due to sensory or emotional dysregulation as simple behavioural issues that will be fixed with discipline or suspension.
- More training is required, specifically around neuro-affirming approaches.
- Most teachers, EAs and staff higher up don't have relevant or up to date training in best practices for working with autistic students. An exception would be the specialist schools or education support but not all autistic students are eligible for admission to these schools, or are not accessible due to location.
- Some of my families are dealing with therapists from 5 or 6 different clinics, so their funding is swallowed up by travel time and 'meetings'.
- The level of adjustment to curriculum and support varies greatly and teachers often do not have adequate resources to meet needs of children with greater level of need. I'm a social worker and support coordinator and see an increasing number of children home schooled due to school refusal. There are limited programs to support transition from home to school eg staff building relationships with children in their homes to build trust and rapport to facilitate transition to school environment. Or alternative educational

model/s that don't rely on children having to attend school and parents left with no option but register to home school. An environment by virtue of its size, sensory input etc is not suitable for some children.

Please tell us about supports that are working well for autistic students in WA schools?

Students

- Being allowed stim products in class helps a lot. If I could wear my headphones and have more in depth instructions I'd feel more comfortable but I am yet to access that.
- One of my main supports is for me, is to be allowed to wear noise cancelling headphones in class. However other than that my only other real support is to be allowed breaks outside my classroom or in student services.
- My two friends and my teachers help with me emotionally (e.g if I have a mental breakdown)
- I have an EA some days.
- I had only one teacher who I felt safe and heard around, if I had any problems I could turn to him.
- I hid in the library at lunch time, but I wasn't allowed in at recess.
- in school i used to have an teachers assistant to help me stay on track, this support was vital for me, but was often taken away to aid other students or simply because someone i never met decided i didn't need it.
- I think schools need to have supportive, understanding teachers towards their students, regardless of age, gender, race and disability.

Parents / Carers

- A well trained EA that is able to consistently support the child as needed and form a positive trusting relationship with the child is vital to their success in school.
- Ability for private therapists to attend schools.
- Access to a sensory room.
- Accessing the school therapy dog Support services from the schools. Education assistance during class time. Adjustable school time table according to my children's needs. Individual Education Plan developed to created with consultation with the school.
- Accommodating needs of different children.
- Accommodations for uniform for sensory issues.
- After moving schools, including Ed support 4 times by year 2 my child finally qualified for 1:1 EA time. Our country school has tried many different strategies and has been flexible and open to ideas from therapists.
- Allowing parents to have their say.
- An enthusiastic teacher who is willing to modify learning methods and seek & take guidance from speech, ot & psychologist's.
- At one school I have found communication between staff great.
- Avenues that offer choice when students experience sensory overload i.e. using headphones in class; not attending electives.
- Because the smaller class sizes helps and teachers and aids in the classroom and understanding that these kids are different in the way they might need to learn and understand what is required of them.
- Before my child was able to change schools to attend ██████, there were few supports available. He was able to leave his class to go to student services when he felt overwhelmed and was about to have a sensory overload. That's it.

- Being able to access some EA time can make a huge difference Kind, understanding and empathetic teachers are the best help.
- Being connected to a learning support person as a point of call.
- Brain breaks. First work, then break. Small achievable goals. Visual timetables.
- Centralised learning support team to remain consistent throughout the school and to maintain knowledge about the child so there's a formal process to distribute that info between teachers and someone to talk to when teachers have questions; visual supports in the class and for all activities, visual supports for specialist classes, even outside; built in brain breaks throughout the day for all students.
- Compassionate but untrained staff.
- Dedicated EA's are great but our ASD kids have so much more challenges just being in a classroom.
- Depends greatly on the experience of the individual teacher and how much aid is allocated to the child such as EA time.
- Don't know of any.
- EA access and IEPs- however, both could benefit from greater understanding and professional insight.
- EA assistance to help interpret and carry out teaching instructions, teachers who take the time to get to know the students and how to engage and include them in the learning, teachers who can give visual instructions to complement their teaching, break down instructions to smaller more manageable chunks, and scaffold the assessments.
- "EA support.
- IEP.
- On site outside therapy visits".
- EA supports when available.
- EA time to support one-on-one learning in a quiet environment. Allowing students to not have to attend certain subjects that are major triggers.
- EA time when they receive their allocated time, used correctly and if given enough time to assist them. In most cases this is never enough to support the student or teacher.
- Early intervention at school, either by therapists visiting school (and especially when they can liaise with teachers as well as parents) and also through learning support staff at school.
- EA's desire to help my child.
- Eas when available. Some teachers are neuro-affirming in their approaches.
- Education assistants are fabulous if your child has a qualified, understanding and committed one. But having them for half a day or particular days is not appropriate. We can not ask our child to be only Autistic at these times that fit into limited funding for EA time.
- Education assistants can be a good support but there are not enough of them.
- Education Assistants to provide out of class breaks and support in class learning.
- Emotional support EA, case conference meetings.
- Extra aide time.
- Extra one on one time with EAs, education for teachers and support staff, access to sensory rooms, allowance for fidget toys, accommodations for tasks that are overwhelming.
- Extra support in class EA support , ILP (Individual Learning Plan) Communication with the parents and teachers.
- For us very little supports are working due to lack of knowledge and also a lack of communication within the school between support staff and teachers.
- Having a full time EA in the class.
- Having therapists come to my son's high school and deliver supports is one of the only positive supports available to him at his school. At the beginning of the year the school

told us that therapy at school would no longer be an option. We had to fight hard to have it continue.

- [REDACTED] is exemplary So is [REDACTED] The new pilot of inclusive education support at [REDACTED] looks promising but needs to be state wide.
- I don't know - I had to pull mine out.
- I find support in accepting and understanding staff, but no supports for actual education.
- I have not had experience of supports working well. I am currently arguing that noise cancelling headphones are just as vital as glasses. This is in a SLP school.
- I honestly don't think there are any supports that are working well within WA schools. What supports are they supposed to be implementing?
- I really can not say. My son gets some minimal shared time with an Education Assistant.
- IEP's, sensory rooms, "quiet areas", teacher and support staff education.
- If by chance there is a educational assistant that is well trained already in class for another student, then there might be help. Too little funding.
- If the students do not have behavioural issues, the support is a lot more forthcoming. Those who have difficulties regulating their emotions, particularly when dealing with bullying incidences, are often the ones who end up being punished.
- If they were working why did my daughter's mental health deteriorated so much at the hands of DOE to the point of suicide attempts at school.
- If you can get access to EA time and the EA is competent in your child's area of disability and has experience. If you have a Teacher who is invested to use supports and accommodate in their classroom. If you have a Principal/Teacher who is invested in supporting the children holistically and not see them as extra paperwork and manpower!
- If you manage to get a unicorn teacher and/or EA, with some great kids in the class. That is pretty much it.
- In meetings, the teachers heard requests but I guess the classroom reality made implementation difficult.
- In my experience, I had to create and drive the supports that schools implemented. I had to do a lot of parent help in primary school, and make resources for my kids and teach staff to use them.
- In primary school we had great experiences both with [REDACTED] education support unit and [REDACTED] the staff were well educated, kind and understanding. They understood the need for consistency of care and how individuals with autism needed to be supported and took the time to understand each child's support and care requirements.
- Inconsistent, overwhelmed, understaffed, undersigned, outdated.
- Individual teachers.
- Individual teachers who have gone out if their scope to learn about autism.
- It is recognised as a disability requiring supports.
- Limited support to meet the needs of autistic students.
- Minimal adjustments in classes ie change to seating arrangement - reading a poem in a small group instead of to the whole class.
- More autistic kids are in mainstream schools.
- My autistic daughter is often feeling anxious and frustrated that she is dumb because she can't attend school on a regular basis. So I don't think the supports are working well at all.
- My daughter works under a EA in mainstream schooling, her current primary school has access to a therapy room, being able to access therapy time during school hrs helps to maintain employment.
- My daughter's school is exceptional but I know is unusual in that respect.
- My school has recently introduced ASDAN I am hoping it will be good for ****.
- My son receives teacher aids support that is shared with other child in the classroom and works really. All his teachers and the school have good understanding of autism.

- NDIS/APM - Speech, OT & [REDACTED] ED Support Centre with EA's & teacher.
- Nil.
- Nil.
- No support is working for my children, they are too bright for special school but have too many challenges for education support school (mainly their speech) but are too disabled for speech and language school.
- No supports were able to keep my kids in school, teachers lacked the understanding about PDA autism that was required.
- None.
- None.
- None.
- None.
- None that we have experienced.
- None, schools are all about compliance and consequences.
- None.
- Not a lot, at least there is NDIS.
- Not sure, not really had good outcomes to date.
- Nothing.
- Nothing is working well.
- Nothing, as all the other children who have severe behaviour needs or diabetes take my child's Aid time and therefore my child does not get the time she is funded for which is only 2 days a week.
- Nothing. Not much support.
- Once diagnosed the supports put in place are pretty good.
- One on one or smaller groups with a teacher.
- Our current school helped us engage with a NDIS support coordinator and provided a range of reports to support NDIS funding. They have also been supportive of our OT attending class, meetings and providing feedback to the teacher.
- Our school has very limited support in place. There are staff to support literacy skills once a week but my children do not need or utilise this service. Only after I asked for support when my child began talking of self harm did the school have a chaplain speak to my child 2-3 times over a few weeks. This then stopped. I received no follow up communication about this at all. When my child has exhibited behaviours due to his ASD, he has been reprimanded and treated the same as neurotypical children and shown no compassion due to his neurological difference.
- Our school now works with the parents and takes the time to understand the child. They took the time to understand our son and treat him as an individual.
- Our teacher this year was an OT prior to becoming a teacher. She has great awareness of sensory based strategies to help my child regulate. She has also got wonderful skills in supporting dyslexia and his cognitive struggles.
- Part time EA support is good but does not stay at his side all day.
- Poorly applied zones of regulation that put all emotional regulation responsibilities on a child with neurodevelopmental disability rewards and consequences that punish a child for their neurodevelopmental disability while rewarding neurotypical children for being neurotypical.
- Private schools with good pastoral care.
- Private therapies
- Private therapy.
- School listening to parent requests. Trying to implement Sensory safe zones. Open to meeting with therapist supports. Teachers discussing neurodiversity and normalising this within the classroom.

- Schools with staff that actively react to bullying behaviours. Classes that provide grading rubrics. Libraries that are open and welcoming. Teachers that are considerate of hypermobility and proprioception issues.
- SEN team do a great job but can't give every student their time as there aren't enough of them.
- Skilled mainstream staff disability aware. Inclusive practises across all areas of school life. Adaptation for my children's needs. Flexibility in approach. Support in class and out of class. Willing to change and learn. Good communication. Respect for parents and children.
- SLP programs. We were very lucky we live within a couple of suburbs from ocean reef. EVERY highschool needs to have funding for the existing SLP programs. I don't know what we would have done without it.
- Some EAs are just awesome and go beyond to support your child.
- Some schools seem to have more motivation and the willingness to have a holistic integrated approach to providing the correct individualised support for ASD students and families. Staff with knowledge is crucial, this is all levels of staff, not just the frontline teachers and assistants, but management staff as well. Flexibility with attendance, dress codes, and integration with non core subjects ie language is important. Individual support plans, that are tailored to meet the particular needs of each student should be accommodated, as no two students are the same.
- Some well trained EAs. Many passionate teachers. Having therapy teams come deliver supports.
- Sometimes it's hard to find positives. Allowing autistic kids without intellectual disabilities to attend Ed support is helpful, but the expectations of education levels in Ed support are too low, and they don't really care about teaching the children anything academic.
- Specialist Learning Programs.
- Specialist Learning Programs for Autistic Students to help them learn within a mainstream school but they are very few and far between with there only being 1 in the region we live in and with school boundaries, it's very difficult to get into.
- Specialist supports, ██████████ SHS has a social and living class supporting teens which is phenomenal.
- struggling to find an answer.
- Supports that are taking into consideration the students own strengths, rather than applying a one size fits all, ABA style approach.
- Supports that have worked well for my kids have been when the individual teacher agrees to implement the recommendations from my child's OT, speech therapist, psychologist and developmental paediatrician. Specific approaches recommended my by children's team include: Collaborative Proactive Solutions, SEA Bridges program, LEANS program, the Autism CRC Guidelines on Supporting Autistic Children and Young People. Even though the health professionals know a lot, and I have found a lot of resources and guidelines that recommend all these things lifted above, the school seems to be able to ignore requests. I don't understand this, and I think it is totally unfair. Schools get a lot of money from the government to support children with disabilities, but there is nothing holding them accountable when they don't give support, or don't follow the DSE 2005.
- Teachers who understand autism and going above and beyond to make sure kids are supported. Currently our teacher is giving up her own lunch and recess to support our daughter.
- Teachers who would like to be supportive, but are not trained to work with autistic students.
- The EA's are amazing and we need so many more of them!
- The High School which offers Autism as a Special Program have good supports in place which work well.

- The school allowing Therapy to happen at school during school hours.
- The services offered by the autism association and the knowledge and quality of the staff involved are wonderful, it is unfortunate however that they are at capacity and cannot support newly diagnosed children with education and development.
- The special learning program that is in place at ██████████ Primary school. However this school is located in ██████████ and there are no schools in our town that offer the service they do, so we are required to travel 2hrs a day to get him to school. We need more programs like ██████████ offers, but in schools in ██████████
- The staff try their best, but not enough is available to support the kids.
- The teachers and education assistants are very caring and compassionate.
- Therapy in school - my children refuse to engage at home with therapy but will engage at school. It allows the therapist to work closely with teaching staff and make regular observations. Education support centre's in school for additional structure and support but still allowing ASD students to interact with mainstream children and make a variety of friendships. Alternative to ABA style behaviour programs. Staff that approach challenging behaviours from a needs based approach.
- There are some wonderful teachers and EA but limited by resources.
- There is some assistance.
- There is some support. It just isn't tailored to my child's needs. There is no individualised plan in place to educate the staff on how to support my child effectively and my recommendations have been ignored. That is why I am advocating for external support.
- There isn't any in the public system.
- There was support from Autism Association WA in primary.
- There were no supports for my child - I ended up having to remove her from school.
- This is difficult to comment on as our lives experience was limited support. Supports offered were reduced timetable and access to a low sensory space. Neither of these accommodations reduced the child/teens anxiety/sensory load enough for them to be able to attend the school environment.
- To have funding for a weighted blanket and fidgets is great, and the extra EA.
- Trained SNEAs and Ed Support Schools.
- Understanding from teachers and assistants. Teacher assistant that are consistent and get on well with the student.
- Visual schedules, sensory breaks, fidget tools, chill out spaces, noise cancelling headphones, curriculum modification. These supports almost never happen though.
- Visuals, some teachers/EAs being absolutely amazing at getting to know the student and their interests and integrating that into their learning to help them stay focused/interested.
- We could not access any supports because the diagnosis was late in coming. In the meantime, our child's mental health deteriorated and the school refused to accommodate her needs.
- We didn't have any support, they only offered to reduce his curriculum to just maths and English.
- We have been offered NO supports as both our daughters are extremely intelligent and mask very well at school. I've been told there is nothing they can do to help.
- We have no support that is working well. Lots of the good support comes from specific EAs. At the moment my level 3 ASD child gets the bare minimum of support as the deputy in charge of disabilities doesn't want to fill in the more complicated paperwork.
- What support?
- When schools implement TEACH principles.
- Yes an EA can be helpful if the time you need help happens to align with when the class and day that the EA is there. An EA is also only as good as the curriculum the student with autism is trying to access. So occasional EA assistance can be a bit of help I guess. Are they adequately trained though??

- Education support is a fundamental support system for autistic students, my sons progress towards curriculum relies heavily on one on one or adjusted support

School Staff

- Autism Association. Amazing therapists. Parents who are on board. [*Perth-based respondent*]
- Cert 4 EAs.
- Key Support Teachers-Autism.
- Neurodivergent awareness and programs.
- Continued relevant training and education for Special needs Education Assistants.
- Dedicated teachers.
- EA support and literature
- EA support in classroom.
- EA support in mainstream high schools.
- EA support, intervention for language, maths, social skills, emotional regulation. Having sensory spaces available
- EA support. More time for EAS to prepare differentiated work for students based on their likes. More education about the difference between sensory and behaviour.
- Eas, dedicated support units..
- Education Assistant availability makes a huge difference.
- Education Assistant time when you are lucky to get any.
- Education Assistants.
- External agencies who come to our school to support students, this occurs when the students' parent or carer has organised this.
- Good quality EAs. Some PD is worthwhile.
- Having caring teachers and support workers in the schools
- I have not seen any supports implemented and I am not listened to when I suggest extra support.
- IEPs
- Increased awareness by schools, students/teachers becoming more understanding of neurodivergence.
- Individual schools, leadership teams, teachers and EAs who go above and beyond to ensure students have success.
- Nil.
- None.
- Not a great deal.
- One on one support of emotional regulation strategies.
- Paraprofessional access in schools works well. We allow speech therapists/OTs etc on campus to work with the students to allow parents flexibility and also to help train our staff
- Quality trained education assistants and Ed Support Teachers. Therapy sessions visiting school. Funding for camps, chaplaincy, breakfast clubs, enrichment programs, work placement programs and life skills programs.
- School psychologist, special needs EAs.
- See above.
- SEN Plans.
- SEND visiting teacher support and school psych support - the range of resources available, the supports being implemented across the whole school to support ASD and neurotypical students.
- some collaboration between support services and school.
- Some funding for EA support.
- Some have really great access to EA support in the classroom. Some classroom teachers are excellent at making the lessons appropriate for all to learn.

- Some of the staff I work with are amazing.
- Some support from outside agencies.
- Special needs assistants in mainstream classes.
- Special needs education assistants.
- Special programs and qualified teachers (although too few).
- Specialised Learning Program for ASD.
- SSEN, Outloud through NDIS.
- Staff who have time to develop resources, manipulate curriculum or are able to work with students on social scripts are great supports but these are not in abundance in public schools.
- Students having a one-to-one EA who is trained in working with autistic students, the option to work in a quiet area at their own pace.
- Suitably trained EAs, psychologists/ therapists, OTs, break rooms (some schools), specialised equipment.
- Support of Education Assistants, when available.
- Teacher knowledge and skilled support staff.
- Teachers and EA are well educated to support the students however funding and class sizes and even the school environment makes it very difficult to support them to the best of our ability.
- Teachers with an in-depth understanding of twice exceptionally.
- Therapists that come in to work with the students once a week are very good. The student likes them and relates well to them and enjoys their sessions together. (OT's).
- Those that involve the parents/carers of the students - best to use all knowledge available.
- Unsure as the students in my class are still going through the diagnosis process.
- Visiting specialist teachers, NDIS providers - support workers, Funding for EA support, PL available.
- When a child gets allocated time and they actually get it with the TA.
- When staff are provided with quality professional learning. When department of education provides enough disability resourcing support.
- When staff who work directly with autistic children have been trained on neurodiversity and what is reasonable to expect and how to help autistic children thrive, then autistic children feel more comfortable and are able to achieve so much more.
- When there is support like access to education assistants, ot etc , it works well. Without it, it's detrimental to school staff but most importantly the autistic child and other students.
- When whole school culture, methodology and behaviour support strategies align with autistic needs.

Therapists

- Visual supports. When school encourage therapist to work as part of team. When collaboration is supported.
- Additional administrative support, specialised learning programs and behaviour management and support, environment accommodation, visual supports, sensory accommodations and supports, access to therapists during school hours.
- I believe the SSEND team are trying to work with students, however this needs to be a referral and takes time.
- In general, teachers are well informed and work around the needs.
- Opportunities for movement, support from EA to have a walk outside if overwhelmed. Scaffolding and chunking work.

- Schools that arrange regular case conferences and meetings to review supports and amend IEPs. Schools that include and invite therapists at the school and take on their recommendations.
- Schools that have break cards and sensory chill out spaces - and actually take the time to work with the child/parent/therapist to create IEP's and one-page profiles that are practically implemented are schools where I think autistic kids feel heard and supported.
- Schools working with therapists on implementing strategies for continuity across environments. Building knowledge of inclusive practices.
- Supports in education support centre appear to be working well. Smaller schools also appear to be equipped and motivated to support at the level a child needs.
- There are some teachers and education assistants in WA schools that invest their absolute best efforts, time and care into supporting their autistic students.

Please tell us about what isn't working well for autistic students in WA schools? What are the gaps?

Students

- School is a very loud overstimulating fast paced environment. With friends that understand me it is passable but regardless it leaves me tired and burned out. I need an easier access to information and sensory and other help to get through it.
- Many students behaviour, eg choice of words, volume, inconsideration, make study difficult for me.
- To feel safe around people because some kids act like actual weirdos most of the time and also the noise. I can't handle the noise.
- Making friends, social events like discos etc, big emotions, changes in routine.
- The management dismissed my issues, bullying, and suicidal ideation.
- The teachers and other students bullied me. Boys touched my private parts or hit me with things and the teachers saw and did nothing.
- I was a victim of extreme discrimination and bullying and gaslighting from teachers. Teachers would also discriminate against me by publicly comparing me to other students who lacked my disabilities and weren't the subject of frequent assault.
- Talking in long conversations and social skills. The same is with teachers and assistants yelling at me.

Parents / Carers

- 2-4 special needs students allocated 1 EA per class.
- A lot of regular teaching methods are confusing for autistic students. The EA's support the children with obvious disabilities and the rest fall behind. We have EA funding for our child, but she doesn't get any assistance because there are 3 other autistic children in the class with more obvious disabilities. When we question it we are told, " the teachers are free to use the EA's however they like, so you might not get any EA time. Even though you have 10 hours a week of funding "
- ABA in schools - outdated and causes trauma and school refusal. Should be a child centred needs based approach.
- ABA, ablism, rewarding neurotypical behaviour which causes shame, suspending kids for behaviour problems instead of working on triggers.
- ABA. Forced compliance. Reward charts. Ignoring the parents. Talking over the parents in meetings and treating them like they know nothing. Administration in schools who believe that SEND are the experts and not the student themselves.
- Abuse physical and emotional Sending children home because no support in school. Discretion in use of funding and that it doesn't have to be accountable to child it's

provided for or provide EAs for children with needs...I believe that the previous school my child attended did not use my child's funding to support her at all.

- Accurate and early diagnosis.
- Achieving WACE seems designed with neurotypical students in mind. If you are intelligent, but have autism, a specific learning disorder (written expression) and adhd, it does not feel like there are a whole lot of options provided for the way you learn. You must do English but it is impossible to access the General English curriculum and achieve any sort of success. No other options available at our school but do it and get an E.
- Adjusting the curriculum to acknowledge their individual strengths, and not making them pass every single little skill descriptor that they literally cannot pass due to their disability (may be specific to Ed support). Example: literature - reading skills are astronomical, understanding is reasonably high, comprehension and ability to put what they've learnt into words is low, so they don't let the student move on, until they master this skill. This causes boredom, disengagement, and behavioural issues. Would you hold a student with a physical disability back in the same way?
- All of the above good things need to be worked on in schools. My advocacy and hunt for the right schools has given my kids a better experience than many and so overall all of the above issues need to be consistently provided across the Ed system. Higher socio-economic areas impact resources and attitudes in school. Resource schools properly so that the admin can ensure sufficient support for teachers to do their job. Plus make it compulsory for teachers to be trained in disability inclusive practices at uni in depth. Diagnosis and funding is inequitable. If you don't have a diagnosis then it is a lot harder to get support. Teaching in flexible ways across the needs of the class. Lose the competition priority and see other skills as important like empathy, encouragement, participation, values based goals. Set up buddy systems in schools so that neurotypical kids get to grow and learn alongside a neurodiverse kid. Normalise connection and diversity. Transparency in the Ed system is lacking. Individuals in schools can become defensive if questioned and challenged. Defensive attitudes breeds isolation and exclusion. Remove restrictive practices unless absolutely desired and supported by key stakeholders such as the family or individual. Practice human rights approach to Ed. Let the child lead their own model of learning. Adapt to new ways of teaching. PDA kids need new strategies for engagement. Change with the culture. No expulsions. Bring disability advocates into the schools and allow independent oversight of the work being done in schools. The Ed dept has limited accountability and when things are wrong or broken their needs to be fast low cost efficient ways of managing that without the onus of the burnt out parent to champion. Give an independent disability advocate the legal right to enquire and investigate and make findings in regards to complaints, and fund them, independent of the Ed system.
- All teachers encounter neurodivergent students in their classrooms, but training on autism and other disabilities is NOT required, nor is it part of their degree. This is a major problem - and directly leads to staff blaming neurodivergent students for not coping with their unsuitable teaching styles and classroom environment. There were no attempts from staff to develop any support systems for our kids, nor undertake appropriate training. Schools frequently refuse to call in SEND - this should be compulsory, not optional. Our son can't control his body temperature, and needs air conditioning in summer to prevent febrile convulsions. The Principal refused to apply for funding for an air conditioner from the Dept of Education, instead telling us to keep him home from school on hot days (essentially denying him an education because he was too lazy to fill out a form). They were also extremely quick to remove the supports our kids needed, then blame them for not being able to cope without the supports. Seriously, would you remove a paralysed student's wheelchair from the classroom?
- Amount of kids to teacher ratio. Regular teachers and long term teachers.

- "ASD trained SNEA. Actually therapy not just ABA input at school. Actually psychology input at school by Clinical Psychologist specialising in ASD/PDA.
- Attendance should be approached with care. Some ASD students are just not capable of attending school 5 days per week. More education and support should be offered in the areas that ASD kids often struggle, such as navigating relationships, conflict resolution, healthy life choices, protective behaviours, basic life skills etc. this could be done instead of language classes. Overall the schools should still be working on acceptance and giving the mainstream population kids skills in dealing with other kids that might be different.
- Autistic students don't appear to have a full time EA to support them in mainstream.
- Awareness and understanding. Teachers and EAs are only educated on the typical boy signs of autism
- Behaviour management, staffing, time for individual support, social support, protection during breaks for vulnerable young people..
- Big gaps in vocational pathways. Big gaps in teacher training. I am trying to navigate between mainstream SLP and student services to try and advocate for my child's rights. I shouldn't have to in an SLP school. Teachers need training school administrators and student services need training in disabilities and how to talk to parents and the students.
- Bullying, little to No EA time, supports, emotional supports. Parents getting drilled by school for taking the child out of school to attend therapies.
- Children who do not meet the criteria for Ed Support units but struggle in mainstream school.
- Class sizes are way too big 30 in a class, not enough EAs, not enough one on one time for children.
- Classes are too big.
- Communication between head of children with learning disability and teachers in the school.
- Differences in opinion between admin and learning support within the school - deputies take a 'behaviour' approach and learning support a 'disability' approach. Treatment of ASD students the same as NT peers, meltdowns treated as 'behaviour' and consequences show no compassion or understanding. Punitive punishments like 'losing good standing' after having a meltdown. Losing school councillor position due to 'social mistakes'. Described as 'verbally abusive and physically violent' after one meltdown because that is the typical ASD behaviour. Being described as rude. ASD students wanting to have a quiet area to learn in, classrooms are too noisy and busy, requests declined because sitting outside the classroom is too 'unsafe' and the student doesn't have enough funding to have 1:1 EA time. Social and emotion learning in a high school setting seems to be the expectation and responsibility of the parents, to involve external therapies, but the school doesn't provide it. School doesn't have an understanding of antecedent before a behaviour and only see the student reacting. Other students not understanding how to interact with ASD students, victim blaming 'she needs to learn how interact appropriately' or 'she needs cultural awareness understanding to not stare back at Indigenous students' (who give evil looks at others).
- EA support. Teachers understanding of autism and anxiety. Teachers understanding and using accommodations and modern methods of managing students.
- EA to child ratios. Expectations placed on EAs as both care givers and educators. Not having adjustable methods of teaching for those who learn differently.
- Education gaps as many schools are ill equipped to deal with learning difficulties, autism, adhd and anxiety within one child. Schools do not manage funds wisely. Not clear what should be included on an IEP or who should or how it is implemented. Told child is being in inclusive classroom but learning needs are not met.
- Education staff refusing to apply for support funding, refusing to do IEPs, refusing to loop parents in, refusing to use communication books, locking AAC devices in the cupboard,

withdrawing supports then blaming student for dysregulated behaviour, refusing to call in SSEND, refusing students' therapists access to the school. Staff are also adamant that they know best and that parent / therapist advice is not needed / unwelcome, while continually blaming the student for the issues.

- Everything already said.
- Everything. You need to support language as well as emotional and sensory regulation, until you do that things won't change.
- Forcing kids out of mainstream high school because of a lack of willingness to provide adaptive and supported programs... especially for kids who lack intellectual disability but have profound autism - all kids deserve to be around a variety and diversity of kids and school environments that are supportive and work for autistic kids work for all kids.
- Funding being dispersed at the schools discretion and no obligation to support the student that for the funding. Teachers can be ableist and unaware. Senior staff can be dismissive or unresponsive.
- High expectations of the child, expecting them to adapt to the classroom.
- High student numbers so our son was being babysat with an iPad outside rather than learning with his peers. Need trained staff and areas where kids can go to have a break. There is nothing for the kids that fall in between, it's either mainstream or Ed support and some don't fall into either of these brackets.
- Highly dysregulated kids are often pushed out of school, or reflexively punished rather than being proactively supported There is a real lack of awareness often about why children may be 'behaving badly' - they're distressed and need help. Need greater continuity of supports across families & schools, rather than a little NDIS funding here and a bit of EA time there.
- I have 2 autistic daughters and have found that the supports around autistic children is more targeted at male autistic children as their behaviour presents so differently to female autistic kids which means that they are often overlooked and understood. I think training for teachers on how to teach and interact autistic children could also be helpful as my daughter who has recently changed schools has mentioned that the teachers at her new school seem to approach lessons in a different manner which she feels is more beneficial for her. Please note that even though she's in a special learning program her classes are still mainstream.
- Ideas and practicality/teacher availability for implementing programs/supports such as special interest groups and quiet spaces is tricky. Playgrounds can be a minefield and kids need safe quiet places they can escape to and activities where they can play side by side with kids with similar interests during lunch breaks. Teachers are normalising but games and activities can still be exclusive in nature toward a child who is socially outcast from their peers and when given opportunity they will not include the child who is diverse. Learning classroom environments and pressure to complete peer based activities to help learn to work with others can be overwhelming with the noise and demand without listening and accommodating for the child's needs.
- If your child isn't severe enough for special Ed and isn't severe enough for aide time, most are left to float , programs are adapted to make learning easier but doesn't engage the student enough to keep interested.
- I'm not sure.
- In absolutely everything. From class sizes to how content is taught. To framing life skills and abilities rather than remembering facts that someone else deemed important. My kids get penalised for learning differently to others. They should be celebrated for it not belittled and discouraged.
- In an effort to help, too many people overload autistic people with demands to make choices exactly when they're least able to and then ignoring feedback when the autistic person provides it.

- In high school different TA for different subjects. Being able to have a safe place to go to where support is there if needed. Sadly in big school if you don't know the motivation of what works for the child then you will lose the interest of the child
- In kindy, my child completely slipped through the cracks. It was play based and group based, so other kids had more of a turn than he did, as they were louder. Other kids called out the correct answer to mat work, which he heard (teacher didn't) and he looked like he knew the correct answers. He couldn't even recognise the letters in his name out of context - he was really behind the other kids.
- In my experience there is close to zero support available until the child has completed all of the diagnostic testing. This leaves kids floundering with no support. It increases anxiety, depression potential and school refusal. There is also no standard mandatory neurodiversity training so most school staff don't know how to actually handle or help autistic kids.
- In order to understand what happens in an ASD kids day they need to be monitored all the time to help with regulation. Also a quiet room will be ideal for ASD kids to learn in.
- In our experience limited understanding from staff, including education assistants. Not making appropriate accommodations to give the child the best chance to thrive.
- Inability to think outside the box of neurotypical needs in children. Options not given for difficult activities / extra curriculums to accommodate neurodiverse needs.
- Just because a child masks at school does not mean there are no issues!!
- Knowledge- especially autistic girls. Internalised autism, masking.
- knowledge, leadership to guide teachers to their obligations and child's rights, time - teachers are too busy
- Lack of activities during recess, lunchtime.
- Lack of communication and support in secondary education, zero support for year 11 student who is failing and still not getting any extra support and the school will not respond. Not having enough space for sensory areas indoors for children to have a sensory break and schools not understanding what a sensory break is for autistic children. High schools do not cater for sensory needs of students, or support social difficulties in the classroom. In smaller remote schools lack of funding is reducing the support available and what funding is available is often not used to support the child. Not having EA support in the playground for social support. Not having appropriately trained EA staff.
- Lack of EA time. Teach her understanding of autism and behavioural issues that can come with it along with anxiety.
- Lack of indoor & outdoor space for breaks. Training for Teachers and aids other parents.
- Lack of personalisation, too much one size fits all.
- Lack of recognition training for teaching staff particularly for high functioning and girls on spectrum.
- Lack of resources due to what works and what doesn't work for the individual neurodivergent child Lack of understanding of teachers and school staff, you cannot understand autism by reading a book or a training session. No safe spaces for neurodivergent children. Lack of support staff EA's school psychologists and chaplains.
- Lack of support given for autistic girls who are masking to fit in and not be seen. EA time is not prioritised to students in need but only for bad behaviour.
- Lack of supporting and the waiting periods for all appointments.
- Lack of teacher understanding.
- Lack of trained staff. Lack of resources. Class sizes are too large. Inflexible curriculum and timetable. Lack of staff to support students.in classrooms and during break times. Lack of understanding by peers and community. Bullying Treating autistic students with the understanding that they are all the same. Physically restraining students. Too many being excluded, expelled or suspended. Telling students that they can attend part time because they are not coping, where in reality the staff are unable to provide for them in

the school system. No support staff, such as speech therapists, OTs, psychologist working full time in schools.

- Lack of understanding.
- Lack of understanding. Lack of compassion. Focus on meeting curriculum targets rather than individuals.
- Larger classes.
- Lots! No training or funding for appropriate EA time in mainstream which means many children are going into ESC.
- Mainstream teachers trained in accommodating & supporting special needs. Funding allocations from Ed Dept. Lack of Ed Support Schools. Too many students in public school classrooms leading to overwhelmed ASD students and teachers without the time to assist those that are struggling.
- Many teachers, EAs, Principals and then relief teachers don't communicate.
- Misunderstanding of autism. Assuming all autistics share the same characteristics.
- Modern emotional supports - seems to focus on authoritative techniques less than actual LISTENING, guiding & supporting emotionally. Lack of holistic strategies or natural play therapies.
- More therapy at school would really help. It's hard when you need to take your child to regular appointments - they miss a lot of school time and it's hard when working, too - to pay for that therapy.
- More time for education assistants needed. Education assistants needed at break times as socialisation is one of the biggest challenges for people with autism, however priority goes to academic support. All teachers should be trained in neurodiversity as a mandatory part of their degree.
- My child had physical and mental health problems - linked to autism and trauma (terrible experiences at the school) and so was absent a lot. Even though we had a medical certificate the school threatened legal action against me for failing to make him attend school. There was no support for them to attend.
- My child is not going to school.
- My daughters school provides normal school reports instead of individualised reports based on having a disability which can be very disheartening, I'm needing help around ongoing school refusal and the school being more open and accommodating to the idea of a part time enrolment as suggested by the education department, I also have no access to a support worker which our family would benefit from as I think it would help with ongoing problems of getting ready in the morning/ school refusal. [REDACTED] all though they have a autism program I didn't like how they isolated kids into a separate class room for learning which I feel sends kids backwards socially, they are also the only school to block therapy access during school hrs who I feel should be the most supportive of this given they specialise in a program with kids on the autism spectrum they should be understand of its importance, after bumping heads with the school principal we changed schools to our local [REDACTED]. I feel like more needs to be done in schools to help kids on the autism spectrum from a social perspective to fit in be accepted and to build and maintain friendship.
- Need more education for teachers/students on what autism is and how to include autistic children as a normality and understand them better. Perhaps smaller classrooms for them or specialised classrooms. Definitely a huge need for a specialised school that accepts the higher functioning autistic/ADHD children as there is a bit of a space here.....they are not quite "special needs" enough to go into the special ed schools, yet constantly excluded or made to feel naughty in mainstream. It is exhausting as a parent to be spoken to On an almost daily basis about the struggles their child has had that day, when this is something that will not change but is expected to. I understand they are doing their best, but there is a lot of pressure for certain "behaviours" to stop or certain academic standards to be met, and as a parent there is nothing more we can do other

than take our child out of mainstream and home school. Which then leaves us unable to financially support our family, especially if it is a single parent household. The teachers try their best but I feel there needs to be more supports for the school/teachers to be able to invest more time into helping the autistic children.

- No social support during play times. Not enough one to one support. Teachers not having enough time to modify worksheets. Fellow students not understanding what autism is for individuals. Not enough visual supports. Not enough brain - sensory breaks.
- No training in communication devices, complete inclusion, safety for my child by having school fenced.
- Not all teachers fully understand the IEP requirements, nor make the concessions these students require. Children with more severe needs benefit from the EA assistance where other students fall by the wayside despite having specific needs outlined in the IEP.
- Not all teachers have the same understanding and maybe need more training if the aim is to have kids in mainstream school. Lots of barriers to funding. Flexible programs - we are now fortunate but even now some teachers just want him to do the same as other kids.
- Not enough accommodations appear to be given for students that need it. The expectations that autistic students should be able to process information in the same way as same time as their peers. Autistic kids being punished or seen as naughty for behaviour that comes about due to their difficulties or communication differences that are traits of autistic presentation.
- Not enough EA time for my child, not enough education on autism for all staff. Too big of classes.
- Not enough Ed support units available. Ones available are too overcrowded. Not enough EAs.
- Not enough education and up skilling for teaching and support staff.
- Not enough finding for Autistic trained education assistants. Teachers are overwhelmed, class sizes too big and too many students with special needs. Hard to implement accommodations for Autistic students due to teaching load, class size and behaviour management issues. Teachers not trained well in Autism.
- Not enough support for the school in general plus the limitations on EAs and teacher and EA training no Autistic kids are the same and support levels are not thought of for each child's needs
- Not enough support in the classrooms.
- Not enough support staff. Support staff with little training in supporting children with Autism. Lack of communication skills of school staff to adequately respond to parent/carer concerns.
- Not enough teacher assistants, not enough funding, kids are falling behind.
- Not enough well trained EAs. Teaching staff not fully educated around ASD.
- Not having spaces where the child can go to escape conflict or to self-regulate on their own, particular during breaks. Teachers not having enough training and flexibility to allow alternative modes of assessment. Limited to no allowances being made for limited executive functioning skills.
- Not sure????
- Nothing is working well, as all the other children who have severe behaviour, undiagnosed kids, trauma kids or diabetes take my child's Aid time and therefore my child does not get the time she is funded for which is only 2 days a week. If my kids were funded full time teacher aid or if the class sizes were reduced potentially my child could stay regulated and enjoy school and actually participate in the learning.
- Nothing works there's no understanding she can't make friends she's not at the same level as her peers it's sad and cruel breaks my heart no one cares.
- Often too much sensory overload with big noisy classes, demands to perform in confined spaces and uncomfortable environments. Smaller classes with more frequent breaks

and even starting school later and finishing earlier to avoid the hectic times. Better trained teachers and more flexible routines that suit a child's needs.

- Old age ways of discipline. When an autistic child is acting up, the teachers will tend to give warnings to try and get the child back into line. This does not work with a lot of autistic children. The reason they are acting up is because something else is going on. Disciplining them at the time they are acting up is the wrong approach, instead the educators need to be trying to understand what is wrong, not make the matter worse by trying to discipline a distressed child.
- One thing that is particularly awful is the Positive Behaviour Support program, and the Good Standing Policy, at my children's school. Positive Behaviour Support has been explained as "teaching the expected good behaviour". But my children know exactly what the expected good behaviour is, and they really try to do it, but they can't because of their disabilities. For example, the PBS matrix of good behaviour says it's good behaviour to play and work cooperatively in a group, but this is impossible for my children who cannot communicate with a group of kids without support. They don't get any support to communicate in the group, they ask to complete their work individually, and then they get told it's not good behaviour. Another example is the PBS matrix says "good listening" is sitting still and turning your body and attention to the teacher. This is so hard for my younger child that she has to pick at her skin until it bleeds in order to do it. She does it because she is scared that her name will get "moved down the behaviour chart". Her class was told that due to the Good Standing Policy, you only get 2 warnings if you don't do the good behaviour, then you get sent out of your classroom to the office. If that happens 3 times, you lose your good standing. My younger child believes that getting sent to the office or losing your good standing will mean that her teacher hates her, and she is terrified. I have repeatedly told the school that my children's therapy team doesn't recommend PBS for these reasons. The school has not given me any reason they can't instead use an approach that works for my children, that our team of professionals recommends.
- Only two days a week with an EA is insufficient.
- Our schools are not set up for kids living with ASD. Half the time they aren't set up for neurotypical kids either. Some staff tend to ignore the families and treat the children as lesser individuals, they are often punished for reacting to what other students do or say to them, further alienating them from their peers.
- Outdated school systems don't cater for the modern world. Bring back basic skills outdoors more and individual skill based learning and half your issues with autistic and sensory seeking children (problematic behaviours), will be attended. 😊
- Principals, Teachers and EAs need more training and education in how to support Autistic children in their learning and school environment, develop and maintain IEPs, and have an inclusive environment in the school. Autistic students need more consistent EA time, better IEPs, more support at recess times for inclusive social interactions. Support and services are really dependent on the current culture of the school mandated by the Principal and the Teacher for that year. More EAs need to be educated on Autism and the strategies to support an Autistic child. More consistent use and better management of EA time.
- Principles discretion on how funding for Autistic kids is spent. We have moved school 3 times, 2 of them public, the last one private, and the EA availability to my child has been pitiful. I'm transitioning to homeschooling as mainstream offers no where near adequate supports.
- Professional Learning is lacking. EAs and teachers want this but school doesn't pay. Some smaller mainstream schools are just too small and not equipped to cater for higher needs students. Schools are not honest with these families to suggest a better equipped school (edu support centre). Maybe because they want the funding that that child brings or that they are afraid of being discriminative. The best for the individual child is what

needs to be considered. Admin don't know the individual child but are in charge of decisions and don't always listen to EAs and teacher who know the child better.

- Recess and lunch times are problematic. Less supervision, no programs or activities run at lunchtime.
- Resources and funding.
- School psychologists have too big caseload.
- Schools being allowed to use an individual child's funding at their own discretion is a problem, as in our case that funding has largely not been used to support our children. Poorly trained staff and a lack of understanding of how to support autistic children is a huge problem. Children being punished for autism symptoms. Inconsistent or non-existent EA time, leaving children without support, then disciplining the child when the lack of support leaves them unable to do the required work.
- Sending children to the emergency department when children speak of mental health concerns. Obtaining a letter from family GP each time the school advising the school that my child is well enough to go to attend after a mental health breakdown whilst at school.
- Sensory spaces and breaks are not common and often breaks are missed or pressure placed on child to behave/act in a certain way.
- Services are all at capacity. The ability to get OT, speech therapy, psychology support and assessments is close to impossible. Needless to say marking a Paediatrician appointment is even more challenging. Families are very vulnerable during these times and help is needed to support these children and their carers.
- Social support, individual support, behaviour management.
- Student-led exclusion - particularly because they feel the autistic students are 'snitches' when the autistic children say "don't do that it hurts" or "don't do that it makes me feel bad" and have no other recourse than to approach a staff member.
- Students are forced into one-size-fits-all. Autistic students are forced to join teams which can be distressing. Autistic students are forced to do competitive team sports even when they have a lack of coordination that is not tolerated by their team mates.
- Support.
- Support services allowed in schools, Ed support assistants (in public schools)- there's not enough.
- Supports are focused on behavioural kids. Playground is really hard and no supports are available. social anxiety and low social skills make it really difficult at lunch and recess.
- Teacher assistants available to assist the child - when they get to school - when things are overwhelming etc etc / access to a school psych for advice.
- Teacher understanding of neurodivergence (though not our experience) Discipline such as keeping kids in for not doing work when they have a much greater need to have breaks. Expectations to sit still quietly to learn.
- Teachers and admin have little or no training on how to support neurologically different children. These children need support and space during difficult times and staff need training to recognise when that space and support needs to be implemented. Teachers are overworked. They need more time during the working week for planning, researching and implementing these supports.
- Teachers apparently aren't being taught about neurodiversity, so even the Graduate teachers are clueless, let alone the older ones. This should be compulsory at uni and in ongoing CPD programs. The teachers still didn't assist when I showed them the general diagnostic criteria to ask for feedback.
- Teachers understanding the complexity needs of a child with autism that not every student with autism is the same and they need to cater for every child's learning capabilities.
- Teachers, EA's and support staff are not trained well enough in Autism and specifically PDA. They do not understand the demands they place on children all day everyday are too much. They believe behaviour is a choice, they do not understand it is a nervous

system disorder. Class sizes are too high, classes are too loud, the work is done too fast and children who need extra time to process due to sensory issues are just left behind. Schools do not understand anxiety, they think kids are choosing unwanted behaviour. They do not give kids time warnings, warnings when staff change like relief teachers, teachers raise their voices at students, kids are forced to participate in all subjects like sport and speaking in front of the class even when they say they can't. Behaviour charts are a huge trigger of anxiety. Rewards are also a trigger as if someone doesn't earn the reward it is really a punishment as withholding the reward they couldn't meet. Many neurodiverse kids cannot meet the requirements due to their disability and are punished by rewards being withheld when neurotypical kids get the reward just because they don't have a disability.

- The "demands" are too high on many fronts for teens and children with autism. Too many people, too much change, curriculum content is often not linked to their strengths and/or natural interests, constant social demands, expected "output" is often too high. All of these demands overload their nervous systems leading to meltdowns and/or disengagement. This can be true for both children/teens with autism AND children with ADHD.
- The amount of failure and trauma a child has to experience before supports are put in place. The constant turnover of staff. Taking away needed supports when a child is succeeding purely because the supports are there. Pushing kids too hard. Lack of knowledge and training on PDA. The need to push kids toward failure to create the paper trail needed to qualify for SEND support. Not being able to access SEND support for behaviours just because a child has a disability. New staff that come in and change what's working because they have a "better" idea.
- The amount of hours with education assistants aren't enough, causing a strain on teaching staff and possibly effecting education of other students. Dual diagnosis are not taken into consideration such as ADHD and ADD.
- The consistency of an EA. They need to be with the student for more time. There needs to be more rules and regulations in place as to how the schools spend support money.
- The expectation that children with extreme sensory sensitivities can adapt to the high school environment and demands when they are not supported with taking medication, wearing sensory headphones (blanket ban), and reduced timetables to help them manage the overwhelm. I am a single parent and I work, and I'm not able to provide homeschooling. My child doesn't want to go to an alternative school, though their current school keeps pushing this on to both of us.
- The expectation that they can just do what other children do without supports. High schools seem to be worse than primary. That teachers are untrained and often unwilling to learn and understand and sometimes even ignore or are disinterested in a student's IEP.
- The high school options that support, empower and educate our kids are non-existent and the so-called autism programs are an absolute joke! My son is currently enrolled in [REDACTED] a school supposedly running a specialist learning program to support autistic children. And my child has regressed since attending I have had countless meetings over the 2 1/2 years of him attending begging for him to be supported appropriately (he isn't even supported by an EA during class transitions and is then getting punished for not being able to work out what to take from his locker to class! He received detention 4 days in a row for not wearing his glasses and hearing aid which he doesn't always need and is written into his IEP that no one even reads. I had a meeting this week with the school (again after my son's psychologist recommended we remove him from the school after these incidents with serious concerns about my son welfare both physical and emotional) and during the meeting the learning support coordinator could not even tell me my son's primary diagnosis after years of meeting and documents! Nor could she find any documents!

- The IEP that was drawn up for my son was a cut and paste generic IEP that did not support his needs at all. I had to advocate for him and ask his OT to provide assistance in writing an IEP that supported his individual needs.
- The kids with Autism that find it hard like the low functioning get left behind. It's very hard for these kids to catch up to kids that are high functioning. Might need to get help for these kids or set up more Autism schools other than the ones in Perth that are hard to get into. Might need more like in places up north and down south; that's why parents can't get help in Perth because they come to Busselton and the south west to get the help they need and smaller classes.
- The lack of individualised support rather than one size fits all. The lack of neurodiversity positive culture.
- The school as a whole is inflexible in terms of adjusted time-tables / adjusting demands or homework load. The school will not address issues that have been brought to their attention as health concerns for autistic children (ie. sensory processing issues). The school has clearly stated that children need to change to fit in as they will not change for the sake of the children.
- The school he attended in previous years wasn't able to cater for his needs. They don't have the knowledge or resources to be able to offer a special learning program, therefore exclusions was their solution. The education department needs to be investing in professional development training with teachers, better resources and flexibility with programs that can cater for autistic children within the mainstream school environment - without the child being excluded from the peers and made to feel different or less than others.
- The school system does not allow for children with ASD who have developed PDA.
- The teachers and most staff are untrained and do not know how to recognise autistic traits in children nor do they know how to respond and interact and support appropriately once the child is diagnosed.
- The use of funding to assist my child.
- There are a lack of sleep jam education units, hubs etc around. The closest ed support to ██████████ is ██████████ Ed support, who suspend behaviourally challenged students even though they're in ed support?? They won't lock the main door of the unit which means students that are flight risks can abscond.
- There is a huge gap between primary and secondary school. I believe a school like ██████████ Community College would be good for my daughter but she is too young being in year 7. Huge gap for early teens from year 7-10.
- There is a lack of accountability in how NDIS funding is applied in schools. Teachers also are poorly trained in dealing with autism and autism triggers resulting in children being punished.
- There is a lack of compulsory professional development in autism.
- There is no clear progress regarding what is and is not available for students with autism, and how to go about getting plans put in place.
- There is no consistent policy in place for where students can go if they need to leave class. There is no consistent guidelines for teachers about releasing students who need to leave class. There is no consistent policy about supervision of students who have needed to leave class. Autistic students are left to languish in Student Services and their learning comes to a halt, there is often no safe space for them to calm down and gather their thoughts.
- There is no place in the system for children who are very high functioning, but need support. None of my boys would have been eligible for one of the special support units, but all of them would need full-time support by an EA in order to engage in a classroom. With that support they would've stayed in school.

- There is not enough disciplinary action for those who bully others, particularly verbally. There is also a lack of understanding around learning difficulties that can accompany autism, such as dyslexia and dyspraxia.
- There needs to be capacity for customised programming, flexibility with attendance and deadlines. There is a need for all staff to have greater understanding of neurodiversity and demand avoidance. How one day's manageable workload or instruction may be totally unmanageable the next.
- They expect kids to comply and conform.
- Training, training, training. [the gaps].
- Treating them all the same, expecting standardised supports to work for all autistic kids in every situation, lack of knowledge of interception and it's impacts on all kids - would love to see the Education SA program introduced!, No awareness of how senses work differently for different people and how this drains energy, they're knowledge is generally out of date so it's not very neuro affirming, you seem to be at the mercy of the teacher and their level of knowledge/willingness to learn, they are not pro-active! They don't seem to understand that the kid is autistic, will remain autistic and it impacts them every day so if there's an activity on, no-one is asking, how is the child going to be impacted by this? What supports do they need? I'm asking this on a daily basis and I don't understand why the teacher and learning support staff aren't doing the same? Who's looking out for my kid?
- Unfortunately, the methods of Positive Behaviour Support are still being employed within schools. This method is harmful to autistic children, as it focuses on trying to alter the child's behaviours, instead of seeing the behaviours as a beacon flagging what is directly affecting the child's nervous system. This method teaches autistic children to mask, to be 'socially acceptable' and masking eventually leads to mental health problems for these kids later in life (these mental health and self esteem issues are arising anywhere from childhood through to late adulthood) The Collaborative Proactive Solutions method focuses on collaborating with the child to get to the bottom of the problem the children are having, rather than focusing on the behaviours. It also discourages punishing children for behaviours that they cannot control. The PBS method, is a violation of human rights.
- We got absolutely zero support without an official psychiatric diagnosis, for which the school could not/would not provide any kind of referral, assistance or recommendations for. We couldn't afford it so my child was never diagnosed and never received any support.
- We need more specialised programmes/supports in mainstream schools.
- We pay private school fees so we get support.
- We use to be able to have Speech and OT sessions at the school but that all changed this year. Other kids have therapists come to the school but our provider has refused to travel and blame the school. I do no NDIS said at our plan review that school visits aren't has common anymore. I 100% disagree to this. As a single working mother having to remove my child twice a fortnight is a mission. It also means each session he is missing an extra hour school which could be avoided if the therapist could attend the school. It honestly doesn't make sense why they can't come to the school.
- Well there are autistic kids that are overlooked because of masking. Particular girls and more often in country or regional towns where teachers and Ed support don't have the training to notice kids slipping under the radar.
- What isn't working well is the lack of support that is provided to teachers and students. My son for example has an EA that is spread vastly across a classroom. My son attends school but does not complete any work at all. His learning is stunted due to the lack of support that the is able to receive in relation to his ability to regulate and learn. There are no supports that are currently in effect that reduce the stress onto the teachers or the

stress that the student faces when at school. How can the teachers support the child when they don't have the supports in place.

- The gap we personally struggle with is support for students during break times, in our experience support is limited to class times with the exception of students who need assistance with personal hygiene or feeding, however the effects of autism on social and emotional development and independence make break times one of the most challenging times of the day for some students, the lack of support available to students with additional needs during these times has personally led to 17 days of exclusion from education for my son this year (semester 1 alone) this is over 10% of attendance decline, which negatively impacts on educational inclusion, relationships or student/staff rapport and self/ world views.

School Staff

- Allocated funding is absolutely ridiculous. Many students require support at different times throughout the day which cannot be 'scheduled in' to a time. Much more efficient to have someone there at all times to be able to support the students to prevent meltdowns.
- Assistance for behaviours. Its a space for high training...and it's just not there.
- Biggest problem is kids who for one reason or another do not attract funding to support their education.
- Classrooms aren't set up to allow autistic students quiet time, to withdraw when becoming overstimulated. Teachers of young children are required to supervise them- a student who needs to withdraw needs an adult who can be close enough to supervise/support- there is no funding for extra adults in a school to do that. If a teacher is on their own in a classroom with 30 children they can't leave their class to support that student. Autistic students therefore have to stay in the classroom which can lead to negative behaviour when they can no longer cope with the environment.
- Disability resource funding is not sufficient, and when managed by the school this money does not always go directly for the students' support.
- EAs expected to do work of teachers without support or background knowledge of students.
- Enough support EA time available per student.
- Extraordinarily difficult to get diagnosed. Funded support is completely and utterly inadequate.
- Funding and time for children who are waitlisted to be diagnosed.
- Funding...funding and funding. Not enough education assistance, communication support, curriculum diversity social skills.
- Generally it seems to be the challenging students who get all the support time. An autistic child severely struggling academically and with the general day of school gets almost none because they don't create issues for the teacher and students.
- IEP not meeting the needs of the student. Lack of individual accommodations. Lack of trained staff. Celebrating strengths supporting challenges. AAC knowledge.
- Insufficient funding and support people to adequately cater for students.
- Insufficient funding for education assistant support in and out of the classroom. Students need more support in the classroom to access reduced curriculum expectations. Students also need more support from counsellors or school psychologists to support their social needs. Education assistants are also needed to prepare resources for students with ASD but due to limited funding in many cases, resource preparation takes away from classroom support time. We also need more clarity in the external services support that is available to students with ASD to avoid delays in parents accessing any support.
- Lack of collaboration between outside agencies and schools.

- Lack of consistency to students and the EAs , Lack of consistency to how these students are treated. The way the funding is spent that a student get is a concern.
- Lack of funding. No diagnosis. Wait time for a diagnosis. Lack of time to develop individualised resources tailored to the students' needs. Lack of knowledge on how to develop emotional regulation.
- Lack of paediatricians and other services to diagnose children and support families. Smaller classroom sizes are needed so teachers can adequately support students.
- Lack of staff to allow students a break when they need it, lack of understanding of autism by some staff members, diagnosis wait times, reluctance to get diagnosed by some parents.
- Lack of time for supporting students. Needs to be full time not bits here & there.
- Large class sizes, some students don't have the funding for a one-to-one EA, other students not understanding autism which can lead to bullying.
- Letting behaviours go because the child has autism. Making excuses why they can't challenge themselves-reach full potential because the child has autism. Staff who are not (trained) support staff or have experience in special needs do not understand how to interact with or create supports for autistic children. This lack of understanding causes autistic children to fall behind and act out.
- Little to no training for staff- both teachers and assistants Little to no knowledge about dealing with autistic children that are on different levels of the spectrum Limited programmes available to teach and support autistic children.
- Long diagnosis. Not enough staff.
- Mainstream classrooms without EA assistance.
- More money for EA's, smaller class sizes. Sensory rooms or gyms in every school.
- More special needs Education Assistants would help.
- Need more general understanding and exposure to relevant learning theory.
- No funding or time especially for children waiting for a diagnosis or undiagnosed. When diagnosed they barely get any time. It's too difficult to manage them in the class with neurotypical kids.
- Not enough funding for EA support.
- Not enough funding to staff.
- Not enough of the above.
- Not enough permanent positions for Special Needs Education Assistants. Not enough relevant up to date training for teachers.
- Not enough support. Not enough people in school given Autism training.
- Not enough teachers who understand the unique needs of ASD students, not enough schools (& teachers) prepared to make the necessary changes required by the neurodiverse!
- Not enough trained support staff to support every autistic student.
- Not enough training for teaching staff. Not enough EA staff.
- one to one support in schools, cost of services chewing up funding due to travel expenses, more collaboration, frequency of visits to school.
- Parents who are in denial. Lack of funding. Extreme amount of paperwork. Lack of paediatricians. Massive wait lists to see specialists. Confusion for parents on the best plan of attack. Where to first? Then what?
- Private sector not able to access funding immediately once diagnosed, have to change the diagnostic process- no paediatrician appts available for years. Children undiagnosed for years with no intervention developing further mental health problems and poor learning outcomes.
- Social and emotional learning support for upper primary. Lots of changes happening, physically and mentally. Their peers are maturing but often they do not at the same rate. Teachers in mainstream need one-on-one support for these students.

- Some don't get the funding and support that they need. Funding can be very varied. Some school staff are very set in their ways and not flexible in their thinking and delivery to be able to meet the needs of students with additional needs. Some excursions are not thought out well enough to meet the individual needs of their students with ASD, the disrupted routine and unknown schedule can cause lots of anxiety for some kids.
- Some of the staff I work with are disgusting. They are rude, derogatory and bossy towards the staff, and lack any sort of empathy towards families.
- Some schools don't or won't access support for children. It's appalling. Sending a child home to tell his parents to home school him in the hours he is not at school is appalling. Both parents also must work. The parents are having to pay a babysitter when their child is not at school.
- Staff aren't trained to deal with. Also most kids come in undiagnosed.
- The contemporary school institution by design is overwhelming to autistic students - too much sensory stimulus during class/lesson transitions, loud noises such as sirens, too many students in classroom cohorts.
- The fact that they have to be integrated into normal school environments puts strain on the student to behave in a certain way and strain on the teachers to try and get them to behave in an appropriate manner. The funding for the student is shared in the school and the student doesn't have a one on one E/A that he needs.
- The funding model- autism doesn't have an on/off switch depending on when the EA is employed. The time it takes to get a diagnosis. The difficulty in finding physical space for visiting agencies to work with ASD students.
- The number of undiagnosed students due to parents not wanting to or unable to organise assessments. Lack of access to speech and occupational therapy services in country areas due to understaffed primary health.
- The running joke is that students are only autistic for half a day. Because funding never seems to be full time. There are many autistic students with very high needs, especially in the younger years when they are learning to be at school, they need full time support by an EA.
- The special needs assistant resourcing is based on diagnosis rather than need. Some students, particularly in Early Childhood and Years 1 -3 are underfunded as they need more time and support to develop strategies to manage their difficulties and emotions. Assessment and diagnosis is taking up to two years and therefore adequate funding is not available. Some of these students also have co-morbid ADHD or ADD which also does not attract additional disability resourcing unless a very complex and time consuming checklist is submitted. For kindy aged children this can take some time as staff need to observe the student and gather data to support the check-list. Kindy students are automatically given Level 1 funding despite their diagnosis. There also appears to be very strict criteria for the Specialised Learning Programs and some students are missing out.
- The support in the classroom, like assistance. Funding towards these students and programs to assist them in the school environment. Outside agency therapy and support.
- The system is deficit focused rather than strength focused.
- The teachers and support workers don't have the skills to be able to work with children with autism. Students with autism shouldn't be set home because they have a melt down and hurt someone. At the time they don't know what they are doing as their "lid has flipped".
- There is still a high level of anxiety. A lot of other students trigger other students. Maybe smaller sized schools and classes for more 1:1 support. There is too much focus on the medical model of ASD -educators, support workers need to be aware of social emotional strategies and practices do students can feel more inclusive, safe and are able to adjust to the wider community when leaving school.

- Trained staff who know how to work with autistic students. Teachers do not get trained well enough and even then are not supported enough to deliver curriculum that is adjusted.
- Uneducated and assumptive staff and families. A lack of availability of specialised support. Othering of autistic students and staff.
- Wait list for service set, Paed. Too long more than a year.
- Waitlists for therapies. Realistic, effective support strategies for teachers to use from therapists.
- When no help is available at all it doesn't work at all. Currently have autistic child in pp with own education assistant and another education assistant for the rest of the class but no funding in year 1 for the autistic child so 1 teacher 24 students plus the autistic student. Another scenario, autistic child with only 2 days of support and 3 days a week a struggle for teacher and class. Learning hard to achieve.

Therapists

- Minimal education dept resources and training to support teachers to implement accommodations for autistic clients and why these are required. Minimal training resulting in a medical model view of neurodivergence/disability as a whole. Limitations in education assistant funding for autistic students.
- When schools actively make it difficult for therapy to occur in school or shun support that is offered. When expectations are too high.
- Difficulty in booking therapy at the start of each term, accommodations for kids in mainstream classes.
- Education!
- Enough understanding of neurodivergence, particularly in girls. Teachers not having enough professional development in the area and relying on special needs EAs to pick up the slack. Not having extra funding for autistic kids who also have ADHD or SLD diagnosis. Just not enough funding!
- Lack of access to school psychology Lack of funding for EA's to support children and teachers Early childhood school staff engaging with the NDIS early childhood providers. Early childhood teachers are still not aware they can support referral for NDIS funding under developmental pathway.
- Need less behavioural approaches to managing 'disruptive behaviours'. More time needs to be spent building rapport and focusing on a strengths based model of support.
- So many school have no time to implement strategies or they simply don't know enough about autism to work with autistic kids. Classrooms are a sensory nightmare for many neurodivergent kids - bright lights, stuff hanging from the ceiling and walls, teachers raising their voices etc.
- Sometimes, teachers are so focussed on maintaining regulation that therapy goals are lost.
- There appears to be no minimum standard and no clear rule for what is good support. It is unclear to families on what support they can expect and hold a school accountable for.

Do the services that support autistic students, like the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and therapy, work together with the support provided by schools?

Parents / Carers

- Allied health therapists are permitted within my school. This means afterschool can be reserved for an activity or rest.
- As above.

- Being 2 years in the system now with the NDIS, I haven't found support through them and the school.
- Communication!
- Current school does allow outside therapists in - this is very helpful for student, parents and educators.
- Depends on the leadership of the school and their support for the teachers willingness to provide supports in class that help the work of therapists is beneficial to the person and the class. It's seems to be a rarity not the norm.
- Despite repeated requests by us and our child's psychologist for the school to contact the psych to discuss strategies, the school never made contact.
- Education has a curriculum which is jam filled with teachers struggling to find ways to implement everything into each day and week. Pulling students aside for therapy during school hours adds to gaps in learning for ASD students in mainstream school settings in turn creating anxiety over content not learnt when they're next exposed to it.
- Finding a good speech therapy isn't easy but when found is good.
- Getting access.
- Govt departments don't talk to each other Has to repeat yourself over and over It would be so easy if information was shared.
- High school isn't as onto the autism systems that can assist students. Won't implement recommendations all of the time Also suspension for unexpected behaviour is very common leading to disengaged students.
- I am not aware of any link between support services and schools. There might be funding... but for the average level 1 autism kid there is little understanding or support.
- I do not believe that the NDIS and schools work together at all. We are unable to use funding to assist our son's schooling and the school does not receive additional support from the NDIS. Yes, our therapists communicate with the school and provide examples of how they can make it better, but how is a school supposed to implement anything that therapists etc provide when they do not have the capacity, time or training to complete such tasks.
- I don't know how to navigate the NDIS, and haven't had good experiences with dealing with the NDIS. My daughters funding was halved after being asked if I'd like her plan to roll over all because she turned 7 that year (kids don't magically get better at age 7!, the only other time I contacted them was to enquire about access to a support worker but I was met with the response of she's my child so I'm expected to provide that care. The school has made it harder for therapy access to take place at schools letters need filling out signing for approvals etc now which delayed my daughters access to therapy for 6 months.
- I found some Schools would not follow recommendations One teacher refused to follow any as had been teaching 30 years and not changing approach now.
- I have been advised that my NDIS funded supports are quite separate to the education system. I understand this, but the school psych had no capacity to provide any support. I asked for help for both of my kids - but the early school teachers told me that everything was fine and my kids don't need the school psych. Both of my Autistic kids desperately needed psychology services outside of school. I felt very let down by the school system.
- I have been told by both NDIS reps and Ed support people that the NDIS will not support education tools or needs unless it is for tech related to communication. I have funded OT supports from NDIS that are overlapping programs in schools that should be supported by OTs not EAs my child did not benefit from poorly supported life skills group at school as they were already attending life/social skills supported by OT. Schools need to stick to curriculum based subjects and the entire school needs to do social emotional wellbeing and anti-bullying support as part of curriculum. Not singling out special needs students for how to behave in society.

- I have been trying to get a PBS Practitioner to come and support my child at school though there have been a number of barriers. My child's psychologist offered to write a letter to the school to address the bullying and request a reduced timetable though this hasn't happened yet. There has been no involvement from the school psychologist despite the extent of the bullying.
- I have had new staff straight off the street working with my Complex Case Child. DOE don't even look at Risk Assessment for staff and students well they don't even consider it necessary.
- I think they try to but with everyone overworked it is really difficult to put plans into action.
- If the therapist will go to schools and if the school communicates better it would work.
- If you can access the services (a very real problem regionally) then the schools will make space and time for support workers to access the child.
- If you have NDIS I have to use the my children's funding for them to get psychological therapy/counselling as I have been advised you cannot receive a mental health care plan through the public system.
- I'm not sure.
- In our experience at a small mainstream primary school there was no understanding or support, and the treatment was traumatic and harmful. There were no support services working with our school. We have moved our son to a private school this term but I'm answering based on his seven years of school experience at public school before moving a few weeks ago.
- In our experience the school was not willing to work as a team with therapists and our family.
- In some cases, yes. Although there is a huge wait for most supports due to a lack of therapy workers which means many students are going without support.
- Is working because it's driven and organised by me.
- It is all very individual depending on the school and their leadership. there is little scope for the NDIS in the school as it is not relevant. But NDIS funded supports can have a place in the school system. It needs to be guided by the child and the family. In mainstream the need for therapy services attending school is higher because the teacher lacks skills in disability awareness and benefits from the therapist. In special Ed it is optional as the EA and teacher usually have lots of learning skills they can apply and classes are smaller so taking my child out for therapy doesn't seem needed. but if it was then I would arrange it. If schools had their own speech, OT, psych, physio therapist then perhaps this could be a model of collaboration and allow for undiagnosed kids to get support. Behaviour support practitioner models differ between schools and community practice. Is this a good thing or an example of inconsistency in approach.
- It takes so long to get services and then months or more for reports, anything done is charged.
- Kids feeling ashamed of being singled out for therapy, teachers not taught to be neuro-affirming, consistent EA throughout the years.
- Like I said above the therapists don't come to the school. I do give school a copy of the progress and sounds etc to help everyone be on the same topics. Last year we did do a few meetings with everyone involved.
- Little or no communication between school and services, often services will provide information which is dismissed and ignored by the school.
- Mostly yes, but I think in some cases the school is focused on getting the additional funding rather than supporting the child.
- My child's school welcome therapists. They go with the times the therapists can come and provide them a quiet space to work. This could be made better if they allowed the EA to attend too to learn from therapists, but instead EAs have to go elsewhere to support another child.

- My private support services team funded by NDIS attempt to work with the school however due to lack of funding, resources and understanding there can be no change.
- My son has a good team at [REDACTED]. We as a team have pushed the school to be understanding that more of these kids are in the school.. we are at a small school that should take on board the wellbeing of the kids and take on some of their things that might help the teachers understand there feelings at the start of the day and can give the teachers a happy 😊.or they are 😡 and may ask why .. or 😭 crying because someone hurt there feelings, since we have done this the kids feel better. A better understanding all around.
- NDIS and the department of education clearly do not agree or talk to each other as I would like to use our funding to pay for more therapies and support at school but the department seems to not want to accommodate this.
- NDIS clearly state that educational support is outside of their scope. This leaves carers in a difficult situation when support from school is lacking. Additionally, issues at school can result in school refusal causing endless issues around supervision, support, parental employment and leaving parents adrift and without support.
- NDIS do not support anything to do with school Even if behaviour plans are in place - it is to train the teacher/parent and then it ends.
- NDIS does not cover most things at school as they say it's the Education Depts responsibility. Therapy can be done at school but the therapists don't often liaise with the staff about what they are doing.
- NDIS does not fund schools in any way. Staff from outside agencies funded for a student on NDIS may be allowed into school for a therapy session for that one child. No social programs in schools. Poor communication between schools and families. It may take a week to access a staff member to get information.
- NDIS does not have any interaction with education providers. NDIS money is abstract money that is wasted on services that aren't available to people who live in rural communities.
- NDIS funding does not cover school supports at all.
- NDIS isn't flexible enough to meet the actual needs in our family, let alone the school environment.
- NDIS providers are able to provide therapy sessions in school and the school are able to consult with them re strategies. However, case conferences on a regular basis with all stake holders should be the norm, rather than the exception. To ensure that everyone in the team is on the same page re strategies and goals to work on.
- NDIS will not let you use funding to support your child at school because they think that is the schools job.
- NDIS, school supports and psychological services often do not liaise with each other. NDIS usually contact us when the plan is due for renewal, in the last couple of years the plan has been carried over. There is a high turn over of LAC's so there is no continuity of knowledge or care of clients. This does not make for an ideal situation to liaise with other agencies.
- NDIS/NDIA/The government are so busy trying to palm off supports to other portfolios and cutting back the spending, that they forget they are meant to be assisting people to live the lives as they choose. Some therapies and schools can work well together but it depends on the people.
- Needs much better communication between NDIS supports, teachers and SSENDS. SSENDS work very much stand alone and provide generic advice and often Teachers are getting two very different strategy advice for the same child from different parties. SSENDS support needs to be more involved with the child and supporting services to better understand the child's needs instead of offering Teachers generic strategies. EAs need to be more involved as they are interacting with the child the most in some cases providing direct support and educational teaching.

- No communication.
- No support from school, so there's nothing to interact with there. NDIS won't cover my son, despite him now having several diagnosed conditions and sensory issues, so we are onto our third application. The whole situation is diabolical. Parents can't get early intervention even when we try! What hope is there. Neurodiversity should be screened for at every school, and then supported.
- Our current school would not accommodate my sons 2 hour weekly therapy requirements (therapists were happy to attend and do for other students) so I had to then move his therapy appt time luckily they were more than happy and able to accommodate on this occasion but this means my son misses more school than necessary and his break with his peers so we can travel to and from the appointment this also means I am unable to work during this time.
- Our NDIS service provider has repeatedly tried advocating for my daughter within the school, but the school remains resistant to change. They are able to collaborate to organize appointment times. But otherwise, the school is resistant to working with the OT.
- Our psychologist has worked very well in helping the school navigate through some problems.
- Our school isn't receptive to outside services. They make it challenging to get therapists in with ridiculous amounts of paperwork, the principal doesn't allow the therapists time with the teachers and refuses to take on board any behaviour support strategies. Previous PBS practitioner also refused to provide any advocacy for my child's needs within school.
- Our supports do their best but the lack of assistance, knowledge and EA time at school leaves gaping holes.
- Our therapist try to teach staff in class but it doesn't get used, so it's like beating your head against a wall.
- Our therapists have liaised with our child's teacher (once we provided contact details) and our school has allowed therapy to take place at the school.
- Outloud travel to our school and do ot and speech plus the EA sits in to learn plus we have meetings where Outloud the teachers and EAs and parents discuss the best direction to go next
- Please tell us more about what is or isn't working between school and other support services. Allowing therapists to go to the school and meet with teachers.
- Private Therapy- Therapists visit the school to observe & give feedback to the teacher when required.
- School aren't interested in changing policies etc to accommodate ASD student's needs.
- School in my experience has not been willing to work with a therapist unless there is a Positive Behaviour Support Plan in place which we do not have in place.
- School is such an uncontrolled environment. Too much noise, too much conflict, too many unnecessary demands.
- School not listening to recommendations of other support services.
- Schools and NDIS supports only work together if there is an specialist support coordinator overseeing meetings and facilitating the share of information.
- Schools are money hungry. They use our kids money but our kids don't get the support
- Schools are reluctant to let therapists in and follow their guidance on best supports for the autistic child. Highly lacking in EA time, one EA assigned to each classroom but not enough 1:1 time. Discipline procedure based on neurotypical children and not adjusted for a child with a diagnosis or diagnosis nit acknowledge and expected to act like a neurotypical child.
- Schools often don't have the means, staff etc to implement a lot of the recommendations provided by therapists.
- Seems to be teachers Vs therapists.

- Services seem to operate on silos but more because schools are time poor.
- Some school do not allow therapist access to visit No meetings between therapists & classroom teachers for consistency Lack of OTs available in WA.
- Sometimes difficult to book therapy at school, during school hours. No communication between therapists and teachers on reaching goals.
- Sometimes. Communication between the various NDIS therapy agencies for one child is often sadly lacking. One hand often doesn't talk to the other. Usually it takes a highly motivated parent to organise team meetings and sharing of relevant information to achieve the best outcomes for the child.
- Still waiting for NDIS support.
- Still waiting for request for access form to be processed.
- Still waiting on approval.
- Still waiting to access NDIS- but have heard the NDIS doesn't fund anything Education-school related This is currently our biggest problem - our daughter being able to access an education.
- Support services and school are communicating and working together to support child in these environments. School and teacher have been open to communication and implementation of recommendations and supports encouraged by OT and SP.
- Support services are overloaded and very difficult to access. Many families can not even access a diagnosis due to current unavailability of services. Many teachers have limited training and/or awareness around supporting neurodivergency in a classroom environment. It is also unrealistic to assume with current class numbers, resources/supports they would be able to effectively support the needs of neurodivergent students whilst also managing the needs of the rest of the class.
- Support services being so busy they rarely see children, so therefore can't help the school enough.
- Support therapies never communicate with teaching staff - at very least should collaborate with IEPs - but it doesn't happen.
- Taking students out of school for appointments isn't ideal, most therapy providers don't do school visits.
- Teacher are too busy, overwhelmed, with large class sizes to contact speech therapist about my sons issues with writing for instance. Only one teacher in all of his high school years did such a thing. There is absolutely no collaboration between NDIS services and government high schools.
- Teachers are overworked hence are less willing to adapt to children's needs even when the recommendations come from medical professionals.
- The availability of support services and their ability to provide more contact time at school is too low in regional WA. The wait lists for OT, speech, paediatricians etc is enormous.
- The costs associated with their involvement in schools should be covered by the school not come out of the child's allocation from the NDIS.
- The expectation that the school should fund all school related items and NDIS is for outside the school does not allow flexibility for specifics for students that the school will not or cannot fund.
- The NDIS and the supports that parents can access are helpful, however getting the school to actually implement things can be almost impossible at times.
- The NDIS supports are the only ones that exist. Schools are too happy to let kids funding do all the work.
- The school allowing therapist to attend the school is very important. The therapist can see how the children are interacting with peers and also help to educate the teachers.
- The school has allowed my child's OT to join case conferences but I am yet to see any of the OT's recommendations put in place to help my child
- The school has repeatedly declined to implement the supports recommended by our NDIS funded therapists. The school has instead insisted on doing their own

assessments. Sometimes they have brought in outside people from SSEN-D to assess my children. These people don't know my children at all, and when I asked to meet with them the school said they don't need parent consent or involvement, for the SSEN-D assessment. I asked for SSEN-D to communicate with my children's team of health professionals, which they did not. The recommendations from SSEN-D were totally inappropriate, and potentially harmful, and very old-fashioned in the view of our NDIS therapists. I later found out the school got an extra level of funding for my older child as a result of the SSEN-D assessment.

- The school is now demanding that any services provided by outside therapists paid for by the family's NDIS funding works on the goals set by the school, not by the parents. So the school wants self regulation, and has demanded that OTs and speech therapists work on that solely, despite the parents wanting the goals for therapy to be based around 2 way communication and hand strength and fine motor skills etc. The student does not cope with therapy after school. Parents are considering taking child out of school to do therapy instead, which school is also unhappy about. SEND also taking up therapists time during therapy sessions to grill therapists on what they're doing, costing the family upwards of \$200 an hour, without consulting the parents first.
- The school is unwilling to take into consideration the many reports and recommendations from team of Psychologist, Occupational therapists and speech therapists.
- The school won't allow support services to enter the school to help with the support networks they have in place. The schools want us to fix behaviours our children present but won't let us in the school to do it, they want the problems fixed elsewhere but it is the environment in the school my has issues with. Things don't get followed up on and so my child's education suffers.
- The schools can be uninterested or unwilling to do things differently for autistic students, making the connection between professionals and schools useless.
- The therapy works but doing therapy during school time further "other" the autistic children School led 'social groups' also "other" autistic children and in our experience provide no additional value apart from giving teachers an excuse to make it "not our problem" when bullying behaviours come up in class or the playground.
- The three different services DONT communicate with each other. One service is doing one thing and another service is doing another. No one is accountable and no-one talks to the parents!
- The use of funding is not clear to parents and little goes directly to that child. Staff education is a focus and while this is imperative it should not come from an individuals funding. Depending on the therapist you may have managed to secure, support and communication with teachers and support workers is dependent on each individual. We are fortunate that due to being so proactive and involved, we have a supportive team around our child but it has been so hard and very time consuming to establish.
- Therapists that come into the schools and work with staff are great.
- Therapy on site is allowed if able to accommodate (she currently has to do therapy in a public space as no room available)
- Therapy works well with school to provide strategies through OT and support literacy goals through Speech. NDIS not supporting things deemed education responsibility such as tutoring, or support work during school hours for ASD children with school refusal or reduced timetables
- There is a gap in out of hours care funding for kids with autism where NT kids can attend centre based care often at the mainstream school but autistic kids are often excluded from this, and also need after school care beyond primary school, further anything in school NDIS won't fund and there are often gaps, such as for adaptive technology and sensory items in school.

- There is no communication between staff and therapists and parents and information about what's going on and what supports are needed and what would benefit the child in the classroom.
- There needs to be schools for neurologically diverse kids from a much younger age.
- There seems to be no contiguity here at all. Children often need much more supports to be comfortable in themselves and regulated enough to attend school and learn there. This requires a more comprehensive approach and continuity of care for kids with higher needs, spanning family, school and community. Education support aren't even enough for school time, never mind the rest of it. What happens is that parents leave work and other pursuits to be constantly available for their children. spend all their time in meetings with school, taking kids to and from school (with many early pickups), lots of missed days, and then of course therapy on top of that. Never mind having any normal childhood activities.
- There's a disconnect between what support can be provided. I would happily use my NDIS money to provide a support worker solely for my child in the class so he could learn.
- They absolutely do not work together!! School says no that's NDIS and NDIS say no that's school!!!
- They do, providing the school are willing to allow these service providers to attend the school to observe and assist the child. I've had incidents where the school have blocked service providers from coming in as they didn't want to be 'told' what they were doing wrong - however the focus should be on the child and the child only - not on the school processes.
- Too often schools deny NDIS funded therapists access to the school, ignore advice and recommendations, and refuse to implement supports. Meanwhile, NDIS won't provide supports to help students with disability who are struggling in school.
- We are only recently diagnosed so we are at the early stages of applying for NDIS.
- We had a PBS plan done but the school didn't follow it. We've previously had psychs, OTs and speech therapists and the school follow it for a week and then don't bother.
- We have a good support plan from NDIS so have funds available for teacher meetings alone and with us, plus extra if there's a problem. Again each therapist needs to re-establish relationships with each teacher so they don't feel threatened before they can even begin to share knowledge. This makes it more time consuming and expensive. If the teacher is open to learning it's a lot quicker.
- We have had some positive experiences with getting other support (occupational therapy, speech therapy and psychology) to work with the school regarding my son's needs. However we have also had some negative experiences - had a case conference via teleconference with 7 people, 3 outside support services, myself, my sons teacher, principal & vice-principal which went very well. All the notes and information regarding this case conference were misplaced by the school due to staff turnover. A waste of valuable time, NDIS funding and schooling, as it has taken an additional 12 months for a new one to be completed and actioned.
- We have not yet begun NDIS therapy so cannot comment.
- We have only just been recently diagnosed. I suspected ASD was the reason my daughter was struggling at school but by the time I was able to get her diagnosed she was already struggling to attend school and completely ended up completely shutdown.
- We have OT school based visits funded by NDIS but that was at our instigation.
- We opt to have therapists come to the home outside school hours.
- Well we haven't been able to access services from OT or Speech yet since our diagnosis Nov 2022. Some schools deny access to therapists during class times. Some have a no therapy term, so not sure how effective this is. Sending tired stress out kids to therapy sessions at the end of a school day!!

- Yes - I have had services attend the school to educate and advocate, but have to weigh up cost benefit and make sure budget can fit.
- Yes when time is allocated to a child therapy services provided from NDIS can work well. The EAs need to spend the time also with the therapists to help Follow therapy into the classroom for the child. Therapists work well going into a school environment.
- Yes, but only through advocacy from us as parents. Otherwise, the school doesn't do much. I don't think teachers have time to put into IEP's and support for ASD students.
- Yes..... if you happen to go to a school where in-school support services are offered. Fortunately our local primary school had that.
- We have personally pulled our son out of external supports due to the gaps in funding for travelling therapies, the new cost of therapies and associated cost of travel (we have no local available providers and the closest are based 45 minutes away) meant that my son was limited to so few sessions a year that there was no routine in his access, he was unable to adjust to having therapies only 1 week out of 4 for example, and this is a common effect of autism on a child's need for/ dependence on consistent routine. We went through two funding reviews to address this with the NDIS and were denied both times.

School Staff

- Both services working well together for child's best interest.
- Communication between schools and support services are very weak.
- Depends on willingness of administration as to how cooperatively schools work with outside agencies.
- Equity of access to NDIS is shockingly bad.
- Extremely little awareness of NDIS support services, structures and systems that students are entitled to by both school staff and administration, and inconsistencies further demonstrated by the support services themselves, such as staff turnover, funding cuts/ends.
- I had a diagnosed student last and had no support from any support services.
- It works be great if NDIS allowed for in class support as well. The therapist services available to kids is amazing though.
- Lack of communication can be an issue.
- Limited knowledge on autism and how teachers can support students in the classroom. Limited knowledge on where to access support and information. Long diagnosis pathway.
- Massive amounts of paperwork for sometimes not a lot of money or support.
- NDIS can provide amazing support for students especially when teaching professionals and therapists work together. However, some parents don't access support and when therapists don't come to the school it is difficult to have open communication on how we can all work together to support the student.
- Ndis will outright say no that is something the school system needs to deal with, NDIS is only for supporting outside of school. In doing finding applications you have to be very careful things are worded in a way that doesn't not imply it should be the school responsibility so therefore not NDIS.
- No space in schools for therapy providers. Therapy needs to arrange its own therapy space and parents need time to get them there. Or schools given resources to build therapy rooms and charge therapists.
- Not in mainstream schools.
- Not their fault but there is a view that schools do their job and services do theirs and they can't encroach on each other. There should be more working together.
- Once a provider has worked in our school for a while and understands our processes, we work together well. Reports are shared, in-school sessions are scheduled and ongoing sharing of information is the norm.

- Only if the parent is capable of managing the NDIS scheme.
- Outside agencies coming to the school for therapy sessions. More funding for parents to obtain more therapy for their child.
- Parents write goals for NDIS which can be unachievable for the child. There is a disparity between real and perceived with parents at times. Further LIFE skills curriculum for primary schools should be created.
- Please tell us more about what is or isn't working between school and other support services. Sometimes. I think the schools need to be more flexible and more open to letting the therapists into the schools and teaching the staff how to help the student. Although schools get reports I personally don't think they read them or take them on.
- School and support services need to collaborate more so schools can support strategies/programs support services are implementing.
- School does not support in-school therapy. Expect that students do therapy after school adding to students already overloaded day.
- Some service providers are able to support within the school setting at a consultative level, in high school it is less regular that they will be seen 1:1 by a support service within the school day. Some providers are too far removed from the school setting that the strategies they recommend just aren't possible within the school setting.
- That depends on the school and the principal. I have seen principals accommodate for therapists and use their knowledge to help the children achieve and I've seen principals who have refused to allow Allied Health Services into schools.
- The lack of time & money to keep upskilling.
- The therapists often have a very different view of what can and will work with a student in a busy, mainstream classroom, particularly if the student doesn't have an assistant. They work 1:1 with the student, usually withdrawing them from the classroom. They don't have an appreciation for the complexity of a classroom. They will often want to meet with the staff, before or after therapy and don't appreciate they are still teaching.
- The volume of referrals and help needed means that it takes a long time for referrals to be met and help given to students.
- Therapist in schools not working with school IEP or staff NDIS no connection or involvement in school.
- Therapists come in and we liaise with them as best as possible however can become disruptive and provided even more transitions to help support students through. We love having the therapists on site to help not only their student but us teachers in creating more inclusive learning environments.
- Therapists work with us (teachers) to set goals and share strategies to achieve them.
- There is a wide variety of quality between services.
- There is no conduit between schools and NDIS or at the very least, it hasn't been made clear to schools.
- They are generally exclusive of the other.
- Unless the OT or other therapist discusses their session with the teacher there is no correspondence between them and therefore we can't support each other in what we are trying to accomplish with the student.
- Unrealistic support from outside agencies as they have no idea of the dynamics within a classroom.
- We have a variety of support services working with and in the school. Probably the most difficult aspect is finding time for all parties to meet together.
- Why does autism occur in the Australian population at a much, much higher rate than WA schools? Because we cannot jump through the hoops of the Department of Education.
- Works well in places that are open to latest theory and willing to be flexible - varies dramatically between schools.

- Yes they seem to, once parents have initiated NDIS, but some do not and those students miss out enormously, but I do not have personal experience to know if NDIS offer support to parents to understand how to access funding.

Therapists

- As a therapist we have struggled at the start of every year to get access to our clients who we have to see at school - schools are increasingly not letting us in until week 7-8 of term 1, which is a long time for kids to go without therapeutic intervention. Private schools requiring child safe training to be done every year is time consuming and costs the client - it should be understood that is someone has AHPRA registration that they have the quals to works with kids.
- As above, I know of families who are paying more for travel costs per therapy session than they are for the session itself, and I was included in a case conference with 3 other NDIS providers, each of whose charged their usual rate. My personal belief is that there needs to be a limit on travel - if I am an hour away, there will be at least 10 therapists closer.
- Education department staff advised there was no coordination between Dept of Ed and NDIS for increased therapy offering in school setting. School staff have had to take on additional unplanned work load for scheduling of therapists on site. Lack of available rooms/space for therapists at school. Some schools have banned therapists or created significant application processes to get on site. This administration time reduces funding in plans for direct face to face therapy.
- I can see how hard it is for schools to juggle services trying to support children in schools. Many schools work hard to work in conjunction with therapy services. Others place barriers on supports or are not so motivated to collaborate.
- I find that this varies school to school and is often influenced or determined by the value placed on liaising with outside agencies from the school administration.
- Sometimes the school work well with therapists that may or may not be funded by NDIS. Some schools however make it really hard to allow therapists to support students at school and can be resistant to recommendations that could help the student.
- This is the area not working in many schools. Schools find it an inconvenience for therapy staff to attend and make it very difficult- some even celebrating "therapy free February".
- Unless they are trained in specialized courses. I am a special needs teacher of 20 years, with a masters of education and graduate diploma of Behavioural management and still I have been blocked from access to schools.
- Very difficult to book therapy time with school administration.
- Yes as a therapist I find teaching staff very keen to learn new strategies to assist autistic children.

Please rate how well you understand autism (*other comments*)

School Staff

- Autism focused training for all early childhood and primary school educators/teachers should be compulsory in this state.
- But only because of my own initiative.
- Chosen to do PD in this area.
- Have completed study around autism and have an autistic son
- Have experience with autistic grandson and training as I am Level 3 SN EA.
- However, every student who is autistic have their own unique needs.
- I also work as a Paediatric Physio in disability and regularly work with kids with ASD.
- I have a masters degree in Autism.
- I have been trained, all staff should get basic awareness training.

- I have completed significant training in this area.
- I have completed training.
- I have completed training as a Key Support Teacher – Autism.
- I have prioritised training on Autism.
- I have supported a level 3 autistic child for 3 years.
- I know enough to know I need to know more. I can support my students to a degree, but in my class of 24 I have 11 students with substantial special needs. I cannot spread myself that thinly no matter how hard I try.
- I only have a good understanding as I have gone on sort training myself.
- I say "well", but that is compared to other staff.
- I think it should be mandatory for a staff member (teacher or EA) to do an online refresher or in person PD if they have a child with Autism in their class.
- I undergo professional development to assist students with autism regularly. However, I pay for this on my own and do this outside of work hours. Some EAS do not have the money to be able to do this.
- I understand it well but can't help the children I have much along with my class. Expectation of teachers to juggle it all is impossible.
- I'm still learning as much as I can, by choice. All teachers especially the graduates need to have training to support neurodiverse students in their classroom, there are so many students in classrooms with and without a diagnosis for ASD. Better teacher training and understanding will benefit all students.
- It should be compulsory training for all schools, teachers, education assistants, and school leadership staff.
- Lots of own PL.
- More training is always desirable.
- Most staff still have no idea!!!
- My husband has autism and one of my three children have autism. I also usually have between 2-4 autistic children in my class EVERY year.
- Not many education assistants are well trained. On top of completing my studies, I have had to regularly update my learning and certificates and train myself to further understand Autism and the whole spectrum. Further studies to learn more about Autism, PDA , Protective Behaviours, team TEACCH etc.
- Only from learning from friends who have children with autism. Never enough time or money for professional development.
- The training regarding Autism that I received in my Cert IV in Education support was very basic and minimal and did not successfully equip me to understand or work with children with ASD. More training and strategies on how to work well with these children should be provided.

**Please rate how well school staff in general understand autism?
(other comments)**

School Staff

- Abuse of children with numerous diversity is still a thing in some schools.
- Autism Essentials, neurodiversity, PDA, social emotional model, declarative language.
- Depends on the individual.
- Depends on the students in their class and years of teaching experience.
- Each child with autism is different and has different needs Staff members at my school generally try to understand each student and their needs rather than just autism.
- Each child with Autism is different and, although some strategies can be used for different students, it's important to understand that different students require different approaches.

- Each staff member is different.
- It's a big mix.
- It's very individual and school specific.
- Most people are unaware until educated of best practices.
- Some extremely well, others not. Often age related, older staff have outdated views.
- Some have some quite good knowledge, some have very minimal knowledge and this shows in their ability to interact with these students.
- Some staff do have an understanding, but others don't. The people that work closely with these students understand more.
- Staff with the knowledge share the information with fellow staff.
- Teachers trained more recently generally have more understanding and knowledge, teachers getting nearer to retirement need to be upskilled.
- They do their best but lack of time given to prepare resources etc.
- This includes some ASD teaching staff as students are often deemed to be disrespectful or rude for what is clearly an autistic trait. ie. Monotone, lack of eye contact, taking or touching student belongings without asking/prior discussion.
- Those who have excellent understanding are rare.
- Usually depends on their experience with association with autistic people.

Do you think school staff understand autism? (*everyone else*)

Students

- They need special needs training where autistic people share their experiences and what is/is not helpful.
- School physically hurts. It's too loud, too bright, too many changes. I couldn't keep up and it was exhausting. I ended up with autistic burnout in the psych unit. If school had supported me that wouldn't have happened.

Parents / Carers

- Abject lack of communication skills and understanding of autism and the supports that autistic students require - Autism is a spectrum, a one size fits all approach is doomed to fail.
- Absolutely not and if they have learned, it's the basics.
- Absolutely they should be given training.
- ABSOLUTELY! They should have mandatory training in NEURO-AFFIRMING Autism, ADHD, Specific Learning Disorder (learning disabilities), self-harm, behavioural issues (emotional dysregulation).
- All teachers need to understand Autism and how it affects kids differently.
- As I mentioned earlier my son attended a school with a specialty ASD program and the teacher running the caps/ vils classes, gave him detention for not being able to identify, pack and manage his belongings for the next several classes from his newly allocated locker unsupported because she told him once how to use it! Then have him detention 4 days in a row for him not wearing his hearing aid and glasses when he was trying to self regulate his sensory over load (I will point out he can see and hear enough to manage without both and does more often than not) again this is in an ASD class! After speaking to the school about of these being part of his disability it continued. This same teacher then proceeded to write him a behaviour management card for his inability to manage his tone and volume of voice! Again an autistic trait/ symptom not a challenging behaviour. In his 9 years of schooling (+ kindy and preprimary) we have never had a teacher, EA or therapist ever have an issue with my son or his behaviour. In fact he has numerous letters of commendation from other teachers this year and glowing reports! So

yes training and understanding is imperative! Without is so incredibly damaging to our children and their access to education and equality!

- Autism is so complex. Most professionals in the capacity of OTs, Physios, speechies, GPs, psychs etc do not even understand what autism is. It is especially difficult to get an understanding when Autism is so broad and complex. It requires specific training and common sense and flexibility to be able to meet the needs of people with Autism. There is not just one type.
- But only neuro affirming, lived experience and contemporary brain science.
- Certainly some do, the ones that are passionate and motivated. It should be a requirement.
- Definitely not! Understanding autism takes many months of reading/learning...
- Don't understand masking and don't understand some autistic children's need to move whilst learning and are punished for fidgeting.
- Especially internalised presentations, PDA.
- Even in Ed support they don't understand autism. They think if a child can talk, they cannot possibly have autism as bad as another child who cannot talk. There's no understanding or compassion for children who don't cope with change, they're expected to conform.
- Every day, I hear comments from the teachers like 'she had a really good day' or 'she was fine all day today, she only got upset once she saw you'... etc This highlights to me that the staff have limited knowledge on masking and how it affects autistic children. My child has extreme anxiety in the mornings before school, and meltdowns that can last for hours after school. The PBS system is NOT working for my child.
- Far more ignorance than knowledge.
- Greater understanding (and compassion) required.
- Handful of teachers and EAs are incredible !!!! But very sadly most still seem to have biases around what autism is. Some EAs have been extremely insulting , rude , cruel and clearly very untrained !!!
- How can teachers or aids help autistic children without training. They remove the kids from the class or call them bad or naughty children.
- How is it possible for a teacher to support an Autistic child if they don't understand one.
- I feel my sons current teacher has some experience, however the teachers he had last year did not.
- I had support staff at my younger child's old school say "we have children more autistic than your daughter" which to me shows a clear lack of understanding about autism. She may outwardly appear to be coping but she was an anxious unhappy child but just because she didn't present like other autistic to me it showed a lack of understanding about autism.
- I have provided information on supporting autistic kids at school and been told "we already know that". Yet they are not implementing any of the recommended strategies.
- I really don't. The squeaky wheels get the grease. My daughter who was introverted got completely missed. The teachers had very little awareness of her struggles - causing massive meltdowns and bedwetting at home. If the school were more educated / supportive, we would be in a better position now.
- I think all school staff should receive some training to better support autistic students.
- I think its extremely important that it is part of all teachers training to learn about Autism from reputable resources.
- I think more emphasis should be that it's very much a spectrum disability and each autistic child will present differently.
- I think some teachers have a good understanding through personal experience of education from previous therapists and teachers. I think all teachers and support staff need to have training around autism and understanding how what's happening in their

brains shows in their behaviours. Schools should be doing annual PD around supporting autistic students and balancing accommodations and group work.

- I think they understand the concept but not the lived experience. I don't think many want to understand the lived experience because honestly they have too much work on their shoulders and it would take a lot of research on their behalf at this stage. There's no collaborated social model of autism easily available for parents or teachers, its always the medical model.
- In our school, yes.
- It changes wildly between staff who do and staff who don't.
- It has taken me years to understand my 2 ASD kids at opposite ends of the spectrum. One is PDA. Some teachers have great awareness and others are ignorant and want to stay that way.
- It should be compulsory training throughout all schools, mainstream schools included.
- It should be mandatory to learn about behavioural issues.
- It's necessary to know about a subject before you can teach it, if you don't know about autism and how best to support any autistic individual you will not have success. You have a duty of care to the disabled children as well as neurotypical children, they deserve a good education too not just a babysitter.
- It's over ten percent of the population diagnosed and more underdiagnosed or with other types of Neurodivergence and it should be mandatory and annual.
- It's so prevalent now, they need to recognise the signs of escalation, and how to safely de-escalate meltdowns etc.
- It's a lottery as to what type of teacher will enforce their erroneous beliefs about autism on the student. They can be enormously supportive or cause lifelong damage to the psyche of the student. Many \$ in psychology services are now spent trying to undo the trauma of the school years for our child.
- Many of the teachers I have come into contact with DON'T want autistic students in their classrooms. Not because they are horrible people but because they don't have the training to help them succeed or even the time or resources. Too many students in the class.
- More training is definitely needed for all teachers and heads of school.
- Most school staff have a poor understanding of autism.
- Most staff know nothing about ASD and if they think they do it is based off of stereotypes.
- Much more training needs to be given to Principals and Teachers about all the various aspects Autism and what co-exists with Autism, not just the stereotypical views. As well as the sensory side of things but also all the different ways different autistics learn and think, more support for social learning and also how to create an inclusive environment with peers.
- My children are for ever getting in the trouble with the teachers due to teachers assuming my children are being disrespectful and getting sent to student services when in actual fact my children as speaking their truth considering their individual communication style.
- My son struggles with other people being in his personal space. His kindy teacher dealt with this by making him sit first on the mat for activities then the other children would sit around him. When he then got upset and reacted to the other children, then would get punished for being naughty.
- My younger son previously attended a High School without an Autism Specialist Program and Student Services staff and subject teachers showed very little understanding of students with autism. This was illustrated many times with their comments, actions and treatment of my son.
- No not at all. When visiting schools many assumed our kid had an intellectual disability based on an ASD diagnosis; no understanding of the variation in support needs between kids and between days; no understanding of sensory needs, the impacts and the

supports; no understanding of interception and its impacts and how it can be improved; neuro affirming practices in the classroom are lacking; training if any is outdated.

- No understanding of ASD or trauma informed practice.
- No, not at all. From experience most send the child out of the room, to "think" on their behaviour. That's just not good enough, nor would it work. It leads to bigger meltdowns and the child not wanting to return to school.
- Not all staff do, especially teachers who have over 20 other students to teach at the same time.
- Not all. We have amazing ones now but we had to move schools to another town to get that.
- Not always.
- Not unless they have had exposure or training.
- Not unless you've lived it, in my personal experience.
- One of my daughter's current teachers has autism herself - which has been THE best support! Autism seems to be perceived by teachers at the extreme end and mostly in boys, so a "high functioning", autistic girl took a few years to be identified.
- One of my sons teachers did not even know he had autism until I told him in a parent teacher interview in term 2. 90% of teachers I have dealt with in high school do not understand how autism impacts the way in which a student learns and all the other issues that come along with it. They email me in terms of your son is "not working to the best of his ability", "not making use of his time", "needs to choose to attempt more of his assessment", etc, etc. apart from the one lovely English teacher last year, I have never had a high school teacher talk to me or email me through the lens of his autism. It is like they don't even know it exists. The deputy, house coordinator or learning support coordinator will but it does now feel like the system adequately filters this down through to the teachers. In their defence they are simply just trying to survive the system themselves. Something desperately needs to change.
- One or two teachers might.
- Outdated concepts of autism.
- School staff not understanding Autism is one of the biggest reasons my kids couldn't cope in school. When my daughter had swimming lessons she had a meltdown due to sensory overwhelm and not knowing who would be in her swim group (strangers from other schools) if any of the teachers actually understood autism they would have put things in place to ensure swimming lessons were a success. This resulted in my daughter not being able to go to school for two weeks as she was too upset to go while swimming lessons were on. Teachers expect autistic kids to be able to cope with things the same way neurotypical students do, they do not understand autism at all.
- Sensory overload is often considered bad behaviour ...simple strategies just aren't used.
- Should be mandatory.
- Should be mandatory [training].
- So many misconceptions and all students are grouped into the same category without acknowledging it's a spectrum.
- Some do - but often the ones who know someone or have a child themselves - so only if a vested interest.
- Some do and some don't.
- Some do but the majority are learning as they go along.
- Some do some don't. Staff at my child's school have not had any Professional Learning for years. The staff that understand are the ones that are experienced or seek to up skill themselves in their own time and at their own expense.
- Some do, some don't.
- Some do, some don't. Some are willing to educate themselves and try to understand, others have zero care factor.

- Some seem to have a much better understanding than others. There seems to be a very large knowledge gap between most teachers.
- Staff that have had auto-aim training are very narrow minded in what they believe autism should “look” like. They have no understanding of PDA, anxiety and ADHD and how this can also impact the presentation of autism.
- The basics. There needs to be more training, more special needs EA's and more training on different presentations ie PDA
- The school understands nothing about autistic students. They assume that each student is the same and what works for one will work for all of them.
- They should have an understanding of all likely conditions ie GDD, SPD, ADHD, ASD.
- There are so many presentations and asking that it's imperative that teachers are taught what to look out for, how to help and teach kids on the spectrum.
- There are some teachers who really do put forth an effort to understand neurodiversity, but they are the minority. Many teachers have little understanding of the needs of Autistic children.
- They don't. But one PD on autism does not equate to knowing about autism either. It should be a regular requirement. Especially for teachers.
- They have a limited understanding that the quiet shy kid needs just as much help as the noisy behavioural kid.
- They have EAs but I feel it would be more beneficial if there was autism training so there's a better understanding.
- They try to. Teachers are so under pressure What's needed is more Finding for more staff.
- This completely baffles me. Why on earth not? There are ASD kids in every single classroom. Why would teachers not be trained in this. Teachers spend more time with these kids than parents do. Most people don't know about ASD so it should absolutely be the teachers who might notice traits, and be in a position to suggest to a parent that perhaps they should take their child to a health professional for assessment.
- This is an ABSOLUTE NO.
- This is often the most frustrating part of a diagnosis, I felt I was constantly advocating for my child and his needs.
- Training for teachers is massively outdated and ABA based. No Autistic input at all.
- Training in diversity and inclusion more generally should be a strong priority. Empathy for others, leading by example and radical acceptance would go a long way to making school a safer place for more children, and support their ability to learn.
- Unconscious bias and discrimination are a regular occurrence.
- Unless you have an autistic child or family member you can never understand they only see behaviour issues.
- We are fortunate with our teachers as they were the ones who first brought this to our attention. I think the training should be mandatory.
- We have been lucky depends on the teacher. I know my other son's teachers have struggled with the additional learnings.
- Whilst some staff (particularly those with lived experience) do have some understanding, the most do not. This is also true of those who are working in an Education Support Centre setting.
- This varies dependant on the staff member, however there is definitely still people in the field who do not understand.

Therapists

- But they are very willing to learn.
- I attend IEP and case conference meetings across a significant number of schools in the south west of WA. There is a huge disparity in teacher understanding of autism spectrum.

- It seems to be a teachers choice if they choose to learn and seek to understand. Some teachers are incredibly motivated to learn and support students, others are not. There appears to be no expectation that teachers will learn and no accountability placed on a school or teacher if a student is not supported.
- It varies according to experience.
- Many do but simply don't have the time and resources to accommodate them.
- Some do but Most don't! They have outdated views and biases based on outdated information and don't keep up to date in research! They often miss autism because it's not "typical male presentation".
- Unless they are trained in specialized courses. I am a special needs teacher of 20 years, with a masters of education and graduate diploma of Behavioural management and still I have been blocked from access to schools.

What training for school staff would improve support for autistic students in WA schools? (other comments)

Students

- Basic compassion, patience, a willingness to interact with and learn about their students as individuals.
- Learn about autistic people.

Parents / Carers

- "Self advocacy skills" start with being able to say 'no' and having that respected - very hard for adults in schools to accept this strength-based approaches can work well this all requires much more funding for public schools - current arrangements are generally inadequate all round. Schools are asked to do more and more with less and less.
- AAC desperately need teaching for everyone.
- All of the above at some point.
- All of the above- but at first instance make the NCCD training mandatory for all staff.
- All of the above!
- All of these would be beneficial.
- All staff and EAs should have formal training. This should be mandatory.
- All teachers and EAs should have an understanding of autism and appropriate teaching methods.
- Creating the correct environment, amending the curriculum, giving breaks and understanding neurodiverse students, simple things like eye contact isn't simple for Autistic children and pushed may cause a meltdown. When pushed at school if masked will explode in their safe environment.
- Double empathy problem, it shouldn't be the responsibility of the autistic student to change in order to "fit in", we don't want to teach neurotypical skills but for autistic social communication skills to be understood and respected.
- Dr Ross Greene's training [*Collaborative and Proactive Solutions*] rolled out school wide and the abolishment of ABA and PBS in the school system.
- Education on Pathological Demand Avoidance and more education on girls with autism.
- Emotional regulation spaces in all schools, education for neurotypical kids about what it means to be autistic this education should promote inclusivity and understanding, along with behaviour modifications and social triggers that can impact individuals on the spectrum.
- Encouragement of self-advocacy skills in neurodivergent students. Its all well and good to tell them "you need to tell us if you're having a problem" but if they proceed to ignore the child, or outright tell them not to bother them with xyz problem, then learned hopelessness becomes a huge factor.

- Ensuring autistic kids have genuine buddies and support people to help them feel a valued part of the cohort.
- Finding out the child's passion and interest is a great path to promote learning, like play based learning in k/pp. Keep it simple.
- Honestly, the more support that can be provided within a classroom environment the better off the support for out neurodivergent children will be.
- How to teach neurotypical students what Autism is and how to create an inclusive social dynamic in the classroom and playground.
- I believe schools should not be able to chose to not take on board appropriate accommodations and should be held accountable if they refuse to make appropriate adjustments which result in creating a traumatic experience for students and their families.
- I think for the teachers need training in teaching the other children to be more accepting. This is all about the neuro divergent children, rather than about getting the Neurotypical children to behave less like little savages.
- If those things where I've ticked above were available in a school environment for my daughter - it would be amazing.
- In my experience, many autistic people do self advocate, it's just not viewed as such. In these circumstances, the feedback is usually either ignored or the autistic person is punished for expressing it. Especially if they've been overly direct and seem critical, which is likely.
- Inclusion education for all neurotypical kids. Regularly, as part of everyday curriculum. Teach the teacher to do this.
- Life skills, employment skills, alternative education program.
- Maybe EAs can attend an edu support centre for a day and learn from more experienced staff. More visiting teachers from SENDD to support teachers and EAs on individual students.
- More support staff (EAs) to implement these strategies as they are time poor.
- More training is required in all aspects to make these kids feel safe and comfortable and that they can learn in that environment.
- Most important - co-produced with autistic adults, sensory regulation, providing environments suitable for neurodivergent learning, supporting the development of theory of mind, curriculum adjustments for neurodivergent students.
- NO ABA at all. It enforces compliance. I want my child to be able to tell me they are uncomfortable not comply to keep the peace or because it is the done thing. NO ABA it is used in conversion programs for gay people in US. Not suitable in schools.
- Nt kids and adults need to understand how ND kids socialise. It should be about understanding not requiring the ND kids to change.
- Our personal priorities are sensory regulation, classroom environment, theory of mind, self-advocacy & protect behaviours, curriculum adjustments.
- Perfect as suggested above on the boxes. That would be amazing, especially curriculum adjustments for neurodivergent students
- Practical experience working with neurodivergent students.
- Schools are stressful places because instead of playing, too much emphasis is on testing. Children have to transition too often and the content is too much.
- Social skills and emotional regulation for neurotypical students - my kid has way more strategies for a problem situation that the average NT kid. Training on communication styles, variations and how to understand people who communicate differently (not just ND people doing the training, everyone needs training as both sides impact communication and communication problems).
- Support mainstream students to understand the needs of children with autism and more acceptance of different ways of thinking/behaving.

- Supporting acceptance and inclusion of neurodiverse students by mainstream students and teachers.
- Supporting understanding of Autistic Double Empathy problem and autistic social ways.
- TEACCH training to understand how students need to be able to learn in an environment with minimal distractions.
- Teaching neurotypicals about neurodiversity
- Teaching other students how neurodivergent students communicate and play and do their schoolwork. It shouldn't always be up to the neurodivergent students to adapt to the other students. This is an unfair burden. A little bit of acceptance and understanding would go a long way to preventing bullying.
- Teaching students neurodivergent social skills to support students of all differing neurotypes.
- That the above is mandatory rather than guidelines and that words become action.
- The CPS approach, input from Autistic people.
- The game changer here is working with autistic adults. And actually taking them seriously. Also, relationship building is important too.
- Training on Pathological Demand Avoidance. Training on FASD, which can often present alongside ASD.
- Training on the school leaving pathways and options.
- Understanding that not all autism is the same. Especially for kids with the PDA profile.
- You forgot about executive functioning skills - like prioritising, time management and being organised. This will help more than just Autistic kids.
- Recognition of the importance of support during break times for neurodiverse students

School Staff

- Adapting the school environment to suit their learning. Programs that support functional skills.
- All of the above, as well as the 'right' attitude to those who display differently.
- Any and all training relative to autism would benefit school staff! There is simply not enough done to provide time for/ to fund this learning by the state education system.
- As much training as possible!
- Creating independence in neurodivergent students.
- Curriculum adjustments!!!
- How to juggle a separate curriculum for the autistic children along with my mainstream kids who have varying needs also.
- Life skills. Supporting your own wellbeing so you can better help the student. Sensory versus reward breaks. How to best handle refusal Key signs.
- Ongoing training. It's getting more and more common to have several students in each class with different levels of diagnosis.
- School based training so relevant to a particular student that is been supported as they all have different needs.
- Separate classrooms for students with ASD for all ages with trained staff would be ideal so that students can work at their own pace and have breaks as necessary.
- The full positive partnerships professional learning is brilliant. Also need to remember every student with autism is different. Department of Education needs to provide more specialist consulting teachers to work with class teachers re individual students.
- There needs to be changes to the curriculum. For speaking and listening, children are marked on making eye contact. This is completely unfair for a large percentage of Autistic children.
- Training in twice exceptionality.
- Whole school awareness is required, this information needs to reach the other students at the school too - maybe in Health classes. Look up Social Eyes - Elaine Hatfield-White.
- Working with our Occupational Therapist we are able to support our students better.

Therapists

- Double empathy! Not making kids be social in a neurotypical way, supporting their own way of playing and helping their students to do the same. Autism in girls!
- I am currently enrolled with informed trauma practices with regards to attachment relationships.
- Some of these are more suited to different age ranges as well.

How often are Individual Education Plans (IEPs) developed by WA schools for the autistic students you support?

Parents / Carers

- About 2 years ago they stopped consulting me and I have to push and beg to be involved in IEP planning. The IEP is rigid and is only based around curriculum and performance descriptors. It is also ABA based and they refuse to take any feedback on board about this.
- Although in my past experience I have know EAs who have not seen their students IEP to know what their role is.
- Always had one implemented, but we are at an Ed support school.
- Always have an IEP waiting for me to sign guaranteed by second week of Terms 1 and 3. Usually these have not been updated or followed however.
- An IEP was developed and pre-dated for my child without collaboration with me and there were no changes to maths class as she is expected to do the work every other child does even though she missed most of grade 6.
- At our current school that offers a special learning program, however the previous school whilst an IEP was developed it was 'light on' and not as detailed and focused as the current school.
- At the current school my son is at.
- But not accurately.
- But they are more about the student compliance and consequences.
- Dependant on Principal and Teacher and their knowledge of the IEP system. I have had a year of fantastic IEPs from a very experienced teacher and other years where either no IEP, or I've had to push for one and got a 'put something on paper to shut her up' that had no meaning for my child's education in that classroom. The Teachers simply did not have the knowledge, or support from the Principal.
- Depending on the teachers workload (other IEPs) from undiagnosed students, plans may not always be 100%.
- Depends on teacher and demand from school leadership. Also not always provided to allocated SNEA, not shown to therapists.
- Developed by not always implemented or student specific more curriculum focused, not student outcome.
- Developing a plan does not mean that it had been actioned.
- Don't know.
- Generally IEPs are followed up by parents rather than teaching staff.
- Haven't had one.
- Honestly, most teachers do not even know where to start with an IEP for our neurodivergent children. Most parents struggle to assist in the creation of one because our children are so diverse.
- I don't know - I haven't been shown one for my daughter- I don't even know if she has one - and don't know if it would make much difference- it's more the environment and having a teacher assistant that would help her.
- I don't know the answer to this.

- I don't know. IEP's are not functional when the teacher had to manage more than 1 - 2 in each class.
- I find schools reactive to situations.
- I have asked to have my child's IEP changed and developed in collaboration with myself but never get a satisfactory answer.
- I have been asking for IEPs for both my kids since February. I still have not received one for either child. Yet the school is receiving funding to support them. There is no way for me to hold the school accountable for this, even though I know it is breaking the law (the DSE 2005). When I tried complaining to the principal, the principal didn't resolve the issue. When I complained to the Department of Education, the regional office wrote this in a letter to me: "all operational issues related to students fall under the direct authority of the principals and not the regional office" and "the role of this office is not to issue directives to a school in relation to student support plans" So the Department of Education is totally powerless when schools break the law.
- I have had to request them several times and it seems to take a term for them to be implemented. I still only have draft copies and it is term 3.
- I still haven't seen my child's from his current school.
- I usually have to ask for an IEP to be developed and even then the teacher will procrastinate
- I've only received one and my son is year 2 not sure what it's meant to be.
- IEP's are developed, but appear to be more of a "cut and paste" document that holds little actual meaning for the student.
- IEP's are not comprehensive enough for many neurodivergent kids. They need Documented Plans that focus of teacher and staff actions to reduce sensory overwhelm and support self and co-regulation along with all other adjustments.
- If they don't provide the appropriate accommodations for the child to participate in the learning then they put them on an IEP as a cop out to avoid grading them low.
- I'm not aware, so cannot answer this question.
- It is one thing having them written up but there needs to be some accountability with them actually being implemented and communicated with all supporting staff and the parents. In high school it like checking a box for the sake of it. And they set the bar so low I swear some have been written after the fact and are so stock standard they were cut and pasted.
- Its hard getting schools to implement these plans.
- I've not needed one.
- I've only ever had 2 IEP plans for my child and that was because I've asked for them but they haven't been implemented properly.
- Mostly because I have asked for and followed up with this.
- My child does not have an IEP and there has been no attempt by the school to develop one. That is why I'm seeking external support.
- My child had to leave school before she was diagnosed... her individual needs were not able to be met.
- My child has a CAP which is a curriculum adjustment plan. He is capable of learning but needs accommodations.
- My son's IEP has been in "draft" now for 12+ months because it is continually not supportive enough for his needs.
- N/A my child doesn't have an IEP.
- Not enough.
- Once a year but not followed.
- Only because I drive the process.
- Only if requested.
- Only with my insistence and then they left out important factors.
- Our son has a special needs education plan. Not sure if this is the same thing?

- Parents are given very little input into IEPs and some teachers feel they have no right to make suggestions or ask for changes.
- Plans look good on paper but is hard to implement. Teachers are too busy and overwhelmed. Too many students with IEP's.
- So far at least... we have been following up on the school's initial promise to provide my son with an IEP.
- So far we are in pre primary and we have an IEP. However, I am not 100% happy that this IEP is helpful to my child.
- Some teachers are better than others at developing these. More PL and support should be required. I'm aware that teachers get no additional DOTT to complete these and they should. Some teachers have a number of students on IEPs. EAs should also be released to work with the teacher on these, but they are not.
- Teachers are still trying to get the child up to reportable standards. We need to start teaching from the level the child is at, not the level the child should be at.
- Tends to just be a piece of paper that the teacher/staff use to box the child into compliance.
- The High School that my younger son attended in Year 7 that did not have a Specialist Autism Program were very reluctant to draw up an IEP. First they claimed it was not required. Then they said it was not necessary as teachers had "cheat sheets". I finally received an IEP halfway through Term 4 after I had attended several meetings, sent many emails and telephoned. By this time we had decided to remove our son from this school.
- The one I was shown recently had information in it that hadn't been updated since he finished year 9. He is in year 11 now. It appears like they are just for show as there is no follow up of an IEP to see if they have met any goals etc.
- The primary school is excellent. The high school develops a plan but only requires Maths English Science and Humanities to follow it but actually doesn't enforce even that.
- There's generally a little pushback when we have changes but it's got better over time as we have consistently had the same learning support team.
- They are a requirement clearly, but mostly these goals and measures aren't being met.
- They are developed but in highschool particularly are often not followed.
- They can be meaningless. At mainstream primary school. We did this and discussed it in depth. At special Ed they did it with very little input. What does it really mean...how and who does it help...theory and practice differs...good to have a plan and good to consult with parents...review when needed...and actually consider what progress has been made and if none why not.
- They seem to be attempted to be implemented in about week 7 of term 1, by which time my child is floundering, and I don't think they have gotten revisited.
- They tend to happen, but no idea if they're ever referred to.
- They're mostly copy and pasted documents, usually generic, that don't align with the information provided by external supports.
- This was in 2020.
- Usually on request of parents.
- Very few teachers understand how to draft an IEP with a student's "goals" in mind. Furthermore it typically is parent led, not school led.
- We are very proactive and involved in developing this.
- We have a teen child that has never had an IEP even though needs one and needs support.
- We have been at our school for 2 years now. We were given an IEP in our first semester and not again since, despite both our children being on the autism spectrum.
- We have been trying to get an IEP put in place, my son was diagnosed with Level 2 Autism in September 2021 - we have been given a suitable SEN plan in its place as of February 2023.

- We have not yet received formal diagnosis so no plans yet.
- When developed very poor quality focused on protecting the school/teacher not providing support for the child.
- I believe these are an invaluable tool that parents are not nearly aware enough of and should be supported in understanding how to develop one in collaboration with their child's school.

School Staff

- All autistic students I have ever taught have required some form of IEP in some learning area, typically in Personal Development and another curriculum learning area.
- All of our DLD students are on individual plans for language, many of the autistic kids are also on behaviour support plans. Those who are diagnosed leave the LDC at the end of the year though, as LDCs are supposed to only cater for DLD.
- But are rarely updated.
- But they might have planning matrices, plans for social skilling, emotional regulation etc.
- Dept of Education requires all students with a disability are to have a documented plan.
- N/A.
- Occasionally we get students who the parents have not shared with us their child's diagnosis, with these students they do not have an IEP.
- Only because I implemented them.
- Parents have continually asked for a copy of their child's IEP... to no avail.
- Teachers are reluctant due to additional workload with no support.
- Updated each semester, but teachers have to be followed up to get them in on time, and often need assistance to know what to put in them.

Therapists

- However, not a workable document that are always used. More of a cut and paste situation. Strategies and involvement of the student needs to be considered. No one does this, not even in meetings about the student.

Who usually starts the IEP process?

Parents / Carers

- As a parent I have begun the process and worked for the new teacher to have handover. It is difficult.
- As a parent I've had to be a fierce advocate for my child. Without this I doubt the school would initiate.
- Deputy Principal.
- Deputy Principal.
- Did not know.
- Do not know.
- Each time, I have requested the IEP process to start. This is my 5th year of my children being at school.
- Education Support Teacher / Coordinator.
- For one child it's been instigated by the school and presented to us completed just for our info (no input asked for but they have used the info we have given them - and it's his first one). For the other child, his plan was transferred from his previous school and we started the process to update it each year, the school is starting to implement the updating process each year before I or the therapist ask them each year (after 4 years).
- Haven't had one.

- I have found teachers would not listen to me even if I did IEP plan with them. It's not until child's therapist became involved they started to listen and was exactly same recommendations I asked for.
- I have initiated the planning at special ed but in mainstream the teacher did. As regular process. But this was a very organised and proactive middle class school.
- I have tried to have my child's IEP changed as it appears to be a generic version for an Autistic child that does not align with my child's support requirements. It was never approved by me.
- I have tried unsuccessfully.
- IEP gets produced or talked about in a meeting we have had to call due to lack of support for my sons needs. We don't get to see it until the next meeting called due to lack of support. There is no active cycle of following up on goals achieved etc.
- In our situation we have established the need as a team.
- In Year 7 for both boys it was me. In Year 8 the school staff drew up an IEP which consisted of the Learning objectives from the Australian National Curriculum for their Year Group. I complained about this not being individual to my children. I have had the same argument in Year 9 and 10. My older son is now in Year11 and my younger son in Year 10.
- It looks like the IEP only happens when I ask for it.
- It was suggested by my child's allied health team (-the same allied health team that the school told me we didn't need because nothing was wrong).
- It's only when these kids get assessed and then the parents sit with a teacher and deputy heads and we come up with a plan about how to help my son. Then we check base through the year... if all good he get signed off and then it's the teacher and parents... if any problems with in that year then it's sit down and come up with more options to help.
- N/A
- N/A.
- No consultation with parents.
- Not sure I will need to look further into this.
- Or therapist.
- Policy needs to accommodate special needs students.
- School staff and I (as parent) will always request to be included in the initial planning of this.
- Staff put together Primary school then has joint quarterly meeting with parent and therapist to finalise plan and goals High school emails us their plan - no input.
- Teacher is totally responsible for starting process.
- The IEP was discussed when our daughter commenced at the school, but the school initiates the updates each semester.
- They do an excellent job.
- Until this year, no one.
- We have requested our promised IEP.
- We have to wait for the school to, it's "procedure".
- You have to ask and push for it.
- This varies, my sons is updated by the school with my involvement each term.

School Staff

- Can be a combination.
- Learning Support Coordinator - my current role.
- Learning Support initiate.
- Unsure.
- Varies vastly between organisations.
- Would like if parents were made more involved/aware of their child's IEP, its contents and reasoning behind it.

How much are parents and therapists included in the development of IEPs?

Parents / Carers

- 75% at primary school, 0-10% at high school.
- Always been involved.
- As mentioned, above, it has been both high consultation and limited consultation.
- As per previous answer.
- Because I ask for it to happen.
- But we don't feel able to contribute.
- Comments relate to child's previous public school.
- Depends on the teacher. One teacher (previous year) only had one meeting over the year with me and never gave me a copy. I had to wait for my child's SEN Report at the end of each semester (my child doesn't get a normal report). While other teachers have more meeting, involve parents better. Admin should make the slack teachers accountable for meetings and regularly developing and reviewing IEPs with the families.
- Do not know.
- However it is a parent driven initiative. I have to fight for every single accommodation. It took me two years of fighting to have the right supports in place for my child to be included in the sport programme.
- I am not sure how involved my kids have been with their IEPs in their High School which has a Specialist Autism Learning Program.
- I find existing policy usually cancels out progress of IEP such as loss of good standing for poor attendance due to needs not being met re sensory issues and this is an autism learning program!
- I had a meeting before my child started at the school where I was told that the supports we had in primary school (medication, sensory headphones) would not be provided/available in high school as my child was responsible for meeting their own needs.
- I had to push for this and do independent research.
- I make sure I'm available.
- I think parents deserve daily updates on their child and their needs.
- I'm never involved but I have a meeting every 3 months to be advised what there working on / towards.
- I'm the one driving it
- In my opinion some staff do not feel the need to follow and IEP. Communication between staff regarding the IEP is also neglected.
- Initial plan developed. Many staff were not informed. Thus not adhered to.
- It depends on the teacher. Some want full parent involvement others tell parents they don't know anything and that the teacher knows best.
- Meeting twice a year, wish it was more often and will be calling one extra shortly ourselves.
- My son has been at his high school for 3 years. We have seen 1 IEP in this time and it was not suited to his needs.
- N/A [*IEPs not developed*]
- N/A [*IEPs not developed*]
- N/A [*IEPs not developed*]
- N/A - my child is in senior high at a care school.
- Once again I'm unable to comment but I think the teachers would write them and parents are meant to sign them. I know this from having worked in Ed Support Centre.
- Only after fiercely advocating for this to occur.

- Only if I ask.
- Only if I demand it, and then they just send me a copy (no input).
- Only when we request it.
- Primary school was every term. Our current high school we get emailed a very basic document maybe once a year with no prior consultation and the only time we have a meeting is if I want something added, implemented or changed.
- So far at least... we have been following up on the school's initial promise to provide my son with an IEP.
- Sometimes the individual classroom teacher has consulted with me, and my children's team of health professionals, which was really good. Other times, they don't consult with me at all, and when I ask to be consulted my request gets ignored. The Principal supports the teachers to make this choice, and as you can see above, the Department of Education enables it as well.
- Still don't have one, but was given opportunity to develop current SEN plan.
- Teacher dependent - in recent years I have to accept what the Teacher develops as goals for my child. I am quite involved and some comments or changes I've requested have been ignored and not made, especially when questioning my child's ability and knowledge ie they put a goal on there that I know he can already achieve. They use it as a Goal target that they know they can tick off as achieved - hence not pushing my child to his full capability in some areas.
- They listen but don't put in place. A lot of high school teachers have never seen your child's IEP.
- This was difficult to answer as my son does not currently have an IEP. Although it has been discussed with the current teacher on how to engage my son it is honestly impossible with the lack of support provided within the classroom learning environment.
- We are always consulted in goal setting for the special needs education plan and have twice yearly reviews for progress.
- We are homeschooling now.
- We are told of plan, we have no input.
- We had two IEP meetings in four years and they tended to focus their "plans" on compliance rather than actually supporting my child's emotional wellbeing.
- We have had support from rare excellent school psych and have barged into process and drafted the documented plan ourselves.
- We have one school that does.
- I push for this and the school is aware I involve myself heavily in the development and follow up. This is not always the case for every autistic student.

School Staff

- Again varies between schools.
- Always 100%.
- Can't be done without them.
- Case conferences are each semester.
- However these meetings/discussions do not always carry through to the student's IEP. Parent and staff meet multiple times in some cases and important information is still not added. Ie. Diagnosis traits, triggers, behaviours.
- I communicate often with my students therapists and include their goals into activities.
- Not all parents answer the request to give input.
- Our SLP has only just this year taken verbal consideration of parent identified learning goals, however they are not always formally implemented into the child's IEP.
- Parents - always, Therapists - depends on if the school already has a working relationship with the therapist.
- Parents always, therapists rarely.
- Parents always, therapists usually.

- Parents should always be part of the process.
- Some parents are very involved others not.

Therapists

- Even though I have written thousands when I was a teacher. I have supported many parents with breaking down the IEP and then dot pointing questions to ask in meetings that I am not allowed to attend.
- In my experience this often depends on a multitude of factors including the teacher or school's preference and the family's capacity to request or advocate for the therapy team to be involved.

How well do schools understand IEPs, and how well are they implemented?

Parents / Carers

- A document which is often written and ignored by incompetent staff. They are not shared with EAs who support the young person.
- Actually implement them don't just write them down.
- Again, have never had one.
- Anecdotally, not very well (info from forums supporting parents of autistic students).
- ASD kids need their own scaling system / curriculum. Their brains translate info different to neurotypicals.
- At my son's mainstream public school he was not given an IEP despite the school knowing of his diagnosis for two full terms (Term 4 2022 and Term 1 2023) prior to his transfer in Term 2 2023.
- At our current school only (1 of 4, 1 being private, the rest public) this has been done very well mostly, with collaboration between staff and parents. More involvement of EA's needs to happen. They tend to know the kids better than anyone and are undervalued. Changing goals mid term has been problematic and increased anxiety levels of my PDA anxious autistic child.
- Based on previous years documentation and feedback. Education needs, emotional needs.
- Because of knowledge gap, I have developed these, in consultation with external support services.
- Communication is often still lacking despite the IEP being in place.
- Current school with special learning program - very good, teachers understand thoroughly the benefits of an IEP for my child and how this supports his learning, both socially and academically. Previous mainstream school - understanding was lacking.
- Do not know at school what IEP & CAP are - my child should have been on IEP for last 5 years as 5 years behind and has been on a CAP. Still fighting to get it changed. No communication from staff - adjustments not being made in classroom, when complain, shut down by learning support. Told I should be doing more for my child at home. Scoffed at when I said I hoped he would pass OLNA and graduate.
- Doesn't mean they know what the children need and definitely doesn't mean they are followed! They are usually copy and paste from other children, then adjusted if someone brings something up.
- Even with the assistance offered by private psychologist and therapist advice is ignored.
- Everyone tries.
- Feels mostly like a box ticking exercise.
- Hard to tell what to add to an IEP when communication is poor and parent is unaware of what the child is doing during the day.

- Have not found IEPs to be implemented well as the content isn't normal about assisting the child socially and emotionally, it's always about making sure they achieve their academic goals.
- How can they tailor IEPs to needs of ASD students when the staff lack ASD knowledge and understanding?
- I am pleased that my son's primary school staff arranges a meeting to discuss the IEP plan. This appears to be working well.
- I believe there is so much lacking with the development of an IEP. Even after we (parents) have pushed for them, they are very rarely implemented.
- I don't know because as above my child's IEP does not appear to align with my child individual support requirements.
- I don't really know. I have been involved in developing them for my kids. Have only really had any follow up when they've had particular issues with the kids.
- I don't think either of these things are done very well. It is more a case of checking off their list that it has been done, but it is often not implemented or tailored to their needs. It's usually a 'cut and paste' series of support goals.
- I feel that more relief staff need to be aware of it upon teaching a class This was biggest issue and why I pulled child out as was starting to get supported but relief teacher came in had no idea about IEP or child's struggles or support needs and things went backwards.
- I never refer to them during the school term. Only used as a guide.at beginning of term and end. I have no idea how much the teacher applies and implements the plan. At the high school the IEP was good for setting out sensory needs.and.adjustments.in class. Hit a hard spot when asked for headphones with music for regulation purposes in class. Told not allowed to have music inequitable for other kids and too hard for school to manage the other kids desire for music. This was bs but decided not to push it right now. Got to be strategic in how to deal with weaknesses in the Ed system. But school has made other adjustments ear plugs, quiet time, seating arrangements, support in class etc.
- I think they are put in place and strategies implemented by the teacher but not sure they have the true capacity to vary learning to the individual student in a classroom setting.
- I think they require way more education and understanding and put more strategies in place.
- I was receiving 7-8 phone calls a day from the school asking questions about how to support my son. All of which was in his current IEP and student profiles neither of which the staff calling me had seen or had access too, this includes EAs, student services and teachers. Usually the calls were from multiple people through the day.
- I wouldn't know.
- I'm not sure I haven't had much experience with this.
- IEP can be so long that I do not believe every teacher would read and know about the child until something has happened.
- IEP need to be updated on a regular basis. Parents should not be asked to develop behaviour plans. Students need to be at the meetings with parents. I have an email from my child's teacher that says they knew that my child was on a return to school program for one hour a day - but had not realised that this would impact assessment!!!! My child has not passed their units for the last three reporting periods.
- IEPs are mostly cut and paste points that require a lot of back and forth from parents and specialists (ie. psychologist). IEPs aren't fully understood by most teachers, and students with 'invisible' disabilities are often overlooked by teaching staff especially if these students share EA resources with other students in the class. We've seen that aspects of the IEP have not been made available to our child (movement/break card system) despite it being part of his IEP. This has resulted in behaviour that could have been

avoided and meant our child was reprimanded and given detention during break times which he needs to regulate— which perpetuates the cycle.

- IEPs are often not followed. There are a range of children in classroom environments who are neurodivergent. It is unreasonable to assume that teachers (with the lack of support provided and training) that they would be able to delivered individualised education plans to all the students in the classroom. It is unreasonable and without a change in the staffing and support provided to schools it is not going to change and it is unreasonable to put the pressure onto a teacher to perform under such extreme pressures.
- IEP's are so over reached some of these kids will not meet the target.
- IEPs in mainstream & ed support schools are tailor well, however I find that implementation is far better in Ed Support. Mainstream does not always provide IEP to staff working with student (EAs, SNEAs, relief staff, specialist staff), so implementation is not thorough.
- In my daughter case, it very well at all.
- In our experience they don't know it well at all. The one we saw was very generic.
- It depends if the teachers believe the diagnosis and get to know the child. Teachers don't seem to have time to cater for any differences as there is so much content, paperwork and monitoring to do.
- It depends on the teacher. Some teachers have no idea how the IEP works others amazing.
- It has provided some ideas, but I don't believe teachers have taken the time to review it properly.
- It helps if parents/carers are receptive and realistic about the role of the school. Do you research so you can support the school as well.
- It is based on the competency and compassion of the teacher. Some teachers are amazing and others are horrible and ableist!
- It is very hit and miss, pending on who is providing the IEP. Some staff are amazing at generating an IEP, while others struggle.
- It is very variable. When I have requested disability adjustments recommended by my children's therapists and doctors, sometimes they are accepted into the plan and other times they are refused with no justification. Many times, teachers have chosen their own goals without any consultation. Sometimes these goals have been inappropriate or harmful in the views of my children's therapy team and paediatrician.
- It really depends on the teacher, their understanding of autism, their realistic expectations and their understanding of their student.
- It seems very much a tick the box exercise- the narrow and surface level understanding of ASD traits often shows through e.g. forcing eye contact, a lack of understanding that differences in thinking don't equate to intellectual disability etc.
- It very much depends on the individual teachers - some genuinely want to help, others are just ticking a box.
- It's extremely poor across most schools and worse in high schools across most of WA. Unless a principal is enthusiastically onboard and proactive for disability support accommodation and inclusion then there is little chance of keeping staff focussed and prioritising this
- It's around the school, teacher and school values and compliance.
- It's discussed in meetings the teachers EAs and parents.
- It's ticking boxes.
- Limited accommodations as we can not access assessments/diagnosis to provide "evidence" of our child's needs.
- Meetings are conducted between the teacher & parent to discuss goals & achievements. From there the teacher implements & draws up a draft. A copy is emailed to the parent/

guardian to proof read. Original copy signed by parents & teacher & goals are carried out at school.

- My child is “managed at school” there is no support in his education eg I have asked for homework to be sent home and for teachers to email or call if need to tell me what they are learn so they we can support him at home. Because of that my child can’t even get graded on most of his subjects because they haven’t worked out how to test him. He is a smart kid with sensory issues that can read and write and is good at math and science but he doesn’t get the chance to learn because his way of learning is not easy to mark, even though he knows the answers but because he does like the pressure of time restraints and being told to do something now he won’t do it. He’s vocabulary is very high you can have a stimulating conversation about all sorts of subjects. But because he doesn’t do the school work the school has to follow he can’t be graded. It’s very frustrating.
- My son is in Yr 6. This is the first year his IEP has been tailored specifically to his needs and goals.
- My sons IEP only focuses on his behaviour in class. He has no academic goals which has resulted in him falling behind academically. He also has multiple days a week where he just draws instead of doing school work.
 - N/A [No IEPs developed]
 - N/A [No IEPs developed]
 - N/A [No IEPs developed]
 - N/A [No IEPs developed]
 - No understanding and not implemented.
 - Not all teachers follow the plan or cater for it.
 - Not applicable. [No IEPs developed]
 - Not implemented.
 - Not understood well and not implemented well.
 - Not very well implemented in the high school environment.
 - Not well.
 - Not well due to (apparently) lack of resources / options.
 - Often the IEP is unrealistic or unsuitable.
 - Once I was firm and also received outside guidance the CAP was better than originally drafted. There are still teachers that do not follow the document though and try to use methods that are proven to not work with my child. This is very frustrating.
 - Our current teacher has no idea, ours is the first student with autism he has had and it’s been a bumpy ride.
 - Our son is currently been in an SLP. He is starting to transition out so unsure how the IEP will go with his mainstream teacher.
 - Our sons teacher developed goals and then gave to me to view. For the following ones we have had meeting including deputy, teacher and EA.
 - Over the three years my youngest struggled daily with school, whether learning or attendance, we were never offered an IEP. This also wasn’t offered for my other two children who had school issues, who were later diagnosed as autistic. It wasn’t until I started homeschooling that I even discovered the existence of IEP’s.
 - Plan is specifically tailored but poorly implemented.
 - Please see above comments. Neither the High School with no Specialist Autism Learning Program and the one that does, showed no idea of what constituted an IEP. Cutting and pasting objectives from all the subjects in the Australian National Curriculum and presenting them as an IEP is of no help to anyone. It is certainly not an individual plan.
 - Principals should have in depth knowledge to support their teaching staff. All teaching staff should be trained and have access to a support person in the specialist area of the child’s disability to help build the IEP. Teachers do not get enough training or support.

They should not be learning about IEPs when they have to do it for the first time, they should already have this knowledge.

- Schools are not resourced well enough to implement IEPs effectively.
- Schools most frequently develop IEPs targeting the student's behaviour, rather than looking at any academic outcomes. Not good enough. Most of the time, IF an IEP is developed, it sits in a drawer being ignored.
- Schools try to limit goal as this reduces what they have to report on and how much effort needs to be put in to carry out the plan.
- See above.
- Some are wonderful and some are dreadful. Depends on the individual teacher. Doesn't seem to have anything to do with Admin.
- Some do, some don't.
- Some schools we have had to fight to have IEPs implemented properly, others simply haven't had the resources.
- Teachers and staff have very little understanding of young adults with autism.
- Teachers have no idea what supports to put on there and I believe they aren't even followed.
- The IEP is very carbon copy.
- The IEP we are presently working to with our child has been collaboratively developed and we are happy with it.
- The IEP's are often "cut and paste". They will add and adjust things following parental input. Many teachers appear to be unaware of the IEP and there is inconsistency in teachers' implementation.
- The plans are implemented but the staff do not carry out the accommodations consistently or with care. Failures lead to school refusal from the student but the leadership maintain they implement. It's a struggle. They do not have any evidence of compliance. Yet I have evidence to prove non-compliance. Then they try to 'get rid of you' from the school if you complain.
- The school IEP are based around doctors / specialists / medication and previous school reports. What works and what does not work.
- The teachers have been incredible and knowledgeable and doing their best to accommodate my children's needs however they can only do what they can with a part time aid and 8 diagnosed children (ASD,ADHD, diabetes, trauma) plus other behaviour, social and academic issues.
- The use IEPs for behaviour management.
- They are not implemented well because this needs every teacher to read the emails... and we found they don't. My daughter had her art teacher ask her why she isn't attending all lessons and if it's because she can't be bothered, that is not good enough. - my daughter loved art, and now is too scared to attend. She is diagnosed with autism, GAD, ADD. The teacher should have known this.
- They are under trained in my mind.
- They don't.
- They don't just shut my kid in a room stare at her why she's having a meltdown.
- They don't understand individual needs - only academic needs. There's nothing in there about supporting aspects of his disability such as social skills, emotional and sensory regulation, etc.
- They don't understand what needs to be in the IEP, so I have to spend copious amounts of time educating myself, so I can be in a position to make appropriate amendments. The school then stall and drag their heels because they don't understand the amendments, and have to go and get advice. The IEP has never been finalised in 12 months. Judging by comments on the school app, the draft IEP is still not followed.
- They don't!! For high functioning ASD children they do stuff all.

- They don't. It doesn't happen. No high school class teacher has ever mentioned his IEP to me. I get the feeling they are only used to appease concerned parents in meetings with admin.
- They don't. No academic goals, behavioural only. All details are about what the student will do differently, not what the school will do differently to support the student.
- They don't, its ABA old behaviour management that sets the child up to fail and participate in a daily grind of sensory overwhelm, dysregulation and school exclusion.
- They don't, they have a box and they can't, don't won't work outside of it.
- They know how to produce and implement them, just having the time and staff available to do so isn't always possible.
- They may understand the child's needs just not approach it correctly.
- They seem to only focus on educational but I feel like they need to focus more on other areas also ie social.
- They set out goals for the children as to where they want them to get to but they do not put proper support in place to get them there.
- they work very well at IEPs as they are tailored for the individual and are reviewed and adjusted as needed.
- This is done very well at our school, the staff attempt to document in the IEP the expectations of the child and the allowances being made.
- Those who wrote them always did really well for us however those responsible for implementing them were uninterested and they were not followed.
- To be honest, I have found that a lot of work goes into the IEP, but especially at high school level - where each teacher sees many students - that it is not implemented. I usually find out because of incidents at school, raised either by the teacher or my daughter, then I talk it through with the teacher and then she gets the support she needs.
- Two of the main goals on my child's IEP, are as follows: expecting my child to demonstrate within 6 weeks, tolerance to uncomfortable sensory situations for up to 3 minutes. For eg: sand in her shoes, wet clothing. Another one is expecting her to make more friends and behave in a way that is more 'socially acceptable', again, asking her to adjust to suit the needs of the teacher rather than the teacher making adjustments to meet the needs of the child with a disability. Would a teacher expect a physically disabled child to wait for 3 minutes before being allowed to access their hearing aid, or wheelchair, if these were necessary to their disability? Would same said child be expected to stand up without a wheelchair or expected to listen without their hearing aid? There are many methods being employed in schools for autistic children, that do not accurately reflect support of their disability and instead seeks to try and change the child. Autism cannot be cured, or changed. It is a neurotype and should be supported as such.
- Unable to comment for mainstream.
- Understanding of IEPs and what should be in them, appears to be hit and miss - depending on the teacher. With some staff it feels like a 'box-ticking exercise' rather than actually establishing a plan to support the child.
- Unsure.
- Uuuuurgh. They don't understand that autistic kids have different needs and support requirements so they're in trouble before even starting on the IEP! It's in the name and the main point of it is still missed! I'm never sure if it's even read by all supporting and specialist staff. Ours is long! The face-to-face meetings with the teacher to introduce the kid and his family and support team is essential, plus another meeting to go through the IEP to make sure the nuances are understood. The teachers seem to think they can pick and choose what's implemented.
- Very little - lucky if the staff have bothered to even read it - I have come across teachers who didn't even know that my child (that they were teaching) was autistic.
- Very well planned but implementation and re-evaluation not often enough.
- We are told it is being implemented, but it often isn't the case.

- We have one school that has worked around the IEP being supportive of our child being neurodivergent, and find some of those things are implemented well, but after a while they need prompting by our child's psychologist to keep those things going, as they forget about the needed adjustments if he starts doing better, and then wonder why our child is struggling again. We have had 2 schools that do not support the student with the IEP, and the only things they've had in the IEP have been things that they don't have to implement or do anything and it is just the child where the demand is on and it is degrading and insulting.
- We I first did it with the school it was my son Child, psych and OT, the school and a plan and a meeting and how are you going to do my sons educational needs... like a care plan.
- Writing the IEP is maybe 10% of the battle, having them understand my child, how to implement it on a day by day basis is 90%.
- Written very well. Implementation limited.
- Younger teachers seem to know how to do this better. It is only implemented if there is enough staff to support it.
- My son's IEP's are amazing and he is working hard towards educational goals, However in my experience most parents don't even know what an IEP is and staff/ family or carer collaboration is ruptured

School Staff

- ABLEWA 4 x six weekly cycles with 4-6 goals.
- Achievable goals are set for students.
- Appalling.
- Extra EAs are needed to implement IEPs in schools. Sadly this isn't always available. Kids may get an hour a day of aide time.
- Generally, IEPs are well designed and implemented, especially where Learning Support Coordinators drive the process.
- I am at a new school this year, and our SWD coordinator is helping all staff understanding what needs to be done with IEPs. Knowledge and understanding for all staff is constantly improving.
- I personally (from speaking to parents) don't think the schools implement them at all. Not because they don't want to but because they are under-skilled and understaffed.
- I think the IEP's are tailored well to the students needs as the teachers that know the students are the ones that write them up with the parents that also know the students well. But I think during a normal busy class day the IEP's are not always implemented as staff have too many children to look after. Therefore it would be beneficial for all children with Autism to have one E/A working with them to implement the IEP's successfully at school.
- I work with my teacher to develop an IEP. Based on the IEP I create all resources tailored to that student and a daily routine to ensure students has time to work on their goals, have sensory breaks and is able to be part of the classroom environment. However, this has taken a lot of practice and collaboration with therapists. It also takes a lot of time outside of work hours and it is very difficult as an EA to tailor resources and IEPs to a high needs students at work while supervising the student at the same time. Also, with students with autism, their likes and interests change. Which mean to help them engage in learning activities resources need to be change often. This is not the case for all students. Some specialist subjects do not give goals as they don't know the student, some EAS don't understand how to tailor work to the student and some teachers do not know how to do IEPs for high needs students so do very basic ones.
- IEP is developed and parent meeting scheduled. Parent has any input they wish before signing the plan. The documented plan is reviewed regularly by the teacher during the

term to assess if goals are being met, and formally by the LSC at the end of each semester.

- IEPs are often tailored to the child well however I do find that there are too many goals to meet in IEPs and therefore the child often falls short of accomplishing these goals which can become disheartening for all involved.
- IEPs are realistic and relevant to the needs of the child.
- IEPs are tailored well but implementing them on my own is impossible unfortunately while trying to teach my class.
- In my school IEPs are effective and well-implement with consultation.
- Inconsistent due to staff training in using SEN planning.
- It has been my experience that many student IEPs can be sadly inadequate at best.
- It isn't tailored for the individual needs. Depending on the teacher if IEPs are implemented. Often left to the education assistant to do.
- It varies based on how well principals value quality processes and are genuinely inclusive, how well-trained teaching and support staff are and how much education assistance time each student gets. But more depends on the teacher's capacity and genuine desire to differentiate for each student.
- It varies dependent on experience and understanding.
- It's a piece of paper to tick a box and pat themselves on the back. Majority of teachers don't refer to them.
- Learning support staff do well, teachers often need support.
- More training would be helpful.
- More training would definitely help. Teachers are trying their bet but are usually overworked and overwhelmed.
- Most make an effort but work load often makes it difficult.
- Most staff do not know how to create an IEP or implement it.
- Not at all, there is no accountability or consistency or training.
- Not very well
- Not well due to lack of time given. Teachers are busy and hard-working catering for 100s of students and writing and implementing individual plans is too much.
- Not well enough.
- Not well. Our schools are overwhelmed with special needs children and we don't have the funding or resources to cater for them!!!
- Our school luckily has great relationships with parents, therapists and staff to tailor IEPs.
- Ours are great. Many mainstream school ones are not well written or implemented though.
- Poor understanding of what is required.
- Schools are understaffed to assist with implementing IEPs to the standard they should.
- Schools do the best they can with what they have and have access to.
- SEN planning does not always support the targets autistic students and families co-create with therapy and teachers.
- Staff try to the best of their ability.
- Teachers are time poor and under-resourced. Additional time should be given to teachers.
- The IEPs are often well documented however their success relies heavily on support systems and staffing to be correctly and consistently implemented. This is where the IEP falls apart as if the support are not there or infrequent then the learning does not occur.
- The system of IEPs works well but if the autistic child is severe mainstream school is not the right environment but them, they need specialised school to access a better mix of support services and specialised teachers.
- There needs to be allocated time given to teachers to follow up on IEPs etc.
- They are 100% understood and implemented and necessary. More emphasis is needed on social emotional goals.

- They are implemented by executive staff and teachers. I'm sure most of the EA staff, especially casuals, are unaware they even exist.
- They aren't implemented that great, a lot of times they are copied and pasted and often or not they aren't updated or accurate.
- They don't. I have to work with and help class teachers all the time. An example of an IEP goal for a child with selective mutism who never talks in school, was for him to talk.
- They know it, it's just having the time & support to do it. Teachers work load has increased considerably.
- Using ABLWA and Departmental SAER policy to create IEPs. Well supported by our SAER coordinator.
- Very varied implementation - some teachers do it really well, others not so much.
- Very well.
- We do our best. Often in our own time I am a Learning Area Coordinator. I have 50 students on my case load. I have 1 child with level 3 autism. I work every day till midnight to ensure my caseload is covered. I'm burnt out. Parents do not support the amount of work I do nor do they appreciate the amount of effort we put in. I logged 160hrs of PL in one year (last year) on autism and dld. The workload is insane and I earn under 100000. I have a family, 6 kids, and I do not have time. When are we going to recognise the work that schools actually do?
- We have IEPs but sometimes we are restricted to what we can provide due to the inadequate environment or lack of resources.
- With the limited resources (including time and energy) available, school staff do their best to complete and implement IEPs.

Therapists

- I think they could be better - most are not neuro-affirming either. I don't feel there is enough follow up on how successful the IEP is being implemented.
- If they exist at all, they are generally copied and pasted (often with the previous child's name still in it) and the content doesn't practically mean anything... ie the student will be supported to speak up... how... how will the student be supported to speak up???
- In my experience this depends on the experience of the teacher as a whole as well as their experience working with autistic students. Most schools I've worked with aim to review the IEPs each semester. I believe that people do the best they can with the knowledge that they have; in saying that I would love to see more of a shift towards a neurodiverse affirming lens being reflected in IEP goals in the future, for example academic goals suited to the child's interests or social engagement goals centred around the child's enjoyment rather than neurotypical measures of social skills such as greetings or eye contact etc.
- Lack of knowledge of autism results in standard adjustments that are often inadequate. Implementation varies greatly.
- Often the therapy goals with their therapy team and NDIS plan.
- Often written with great strategies but not enough staff to ensure they are followed.
- Some schools understand the process of IEPs, the supports (like SEND) and the ABLWA curriculum incredibly well and do a great job at implementing. Other schools appear to show minimal understand or willingness to learn.
- The planning is excellent, and I believe the intention is there, but lack of support for teachers makes it hard to follow through, especially when some kids have multiple therapy appointments per week that disrupt their learning.
- There needs to be more information and training on SMART goals for IEPs. There needs to be more support with writing one and then implementation.

If an autistic student attending a school you were working at was not being supported well, would you feel confident to make a complaint? (other comments)

School Staff

- Address the issue to the Principal.
- Admin/ ASD program staff do not appreciate EAs questioning their judgement in many cases. On one occasion the Deputy warned me that I would be in breach of the Code of Conduct if I was to question the teacher's discipline of a student.
- Approach administration and discuss the concerns.
- Before making a complaint, I would first raise it with our learning support coordinator to see what changes we could make before making an official complaint.
- Being judged.
- Bring it to the attention of their teacher/Principal.
- Discuss with the teacher involved and with my admin.
- Firstly, bring it up with the class teacher, and together approach admin with our concerns.
- Follow chain of command within school and liaise with parent/caregiver.
- I have advocated for students in the past and I was seen as a trouble maker and effectively pushed out of the school.
- I would approach our Learning Support Coordinator and Admin.
- I would approach the teacher concerned and then move that up the ladder if problems persist.
- I would encourage the parent to make a complaint. But when I did that the complaint was not given the consideration it should have by the regional office.
- I would feel confident to contact the Learning Support Coordinator at my school to seek support.
- I would follow due process. Speak to the teacher, principal etc.
- I would speak to school leadership.
- I would speak to the parent/guardian if they were happy with the level of care our school was providing. If not, then I would discuss it with our principal and children at educational risk officer.
- I would speak to the principal and parents and work out a plan to get the child and the family more supported.
- I would start with discussing this with school administration (eg. deputy/principal).
- I would want to speak up for them but would be worried what others may think.
- I wouldn't because I don't feel confident that anything would change if I complained.
- I wouldn't know who to complain to.
- If we question anything we are treated unfairly or reprimanded.
- I'm a librarian, this is the responsibility of class teachers and Education Support Staff.
- Let admin know & follow up with parent to try & get more support.
- My admin team are very supportive and student centred.
- My Principal is very supportive.
- My school's Learning Support Coordinators are eager to address any gaps in support and our Principal is very supportive.
- No point no services to assist or years in the making to get any action to be put into place.
- Only within the school context.
- Others think they know better than I do, so my opinion is irrelevant.
- Report to my line manager and support the teacher involved, if this was not enough I would take it further.

- See SLP program co-ordinator to see if appropriate for support to be offered to the staff member managing the student. If student were deliberately harmed in any way I would take a record of the incident and report it directly to a line manager or principal.
- See the Learning Support Coordinator, Principal, Additional Needs Consultant.
- Speak to admin.
- Speak to my Lead EA, Line manager.
- Speak to principal / therapy provider / CPFSS depending on the incident.
- Speak to school team, parent, therapists and formulate a new IEP.
- Speak to the Principal. Question why.
- Speak with LSC.
- Start at class teacher and move on to Principal.
- Take it to leadership. Ask the SWD coordinator to get involved. Speak directly to the staff member.
- Take it up with the Principal.
- Take my concerns to the administration team at the school and the students classroom teacher.
- Talk to admin, ask for EA support and equipment/space that will cater for child's needs.
- Talk to my line manager, try to offer support where I could for this child.
- Talk to the Coordinator or upline.
- Talk with the Sen person
- Talk with the teacher. Ask to look at the IEPs.
- The family I am referring to has made several attempts to have discussion about a plan for their child to attend school full-time. This has been happening for both his kindy and pre-primary year.
- There is no support. Making a complaint adds to the workload of a colleague who is already swamped.
- There is no-one to complain to, they fall on deaf ears.
- To whom? And supported by whom?
- What can be done? We need smaller class sizes, more funding for more support staff- in my class of 20 children, I have 4 with autism- only 3 are formally diagnosed, 2 with other special needs, another 3 with developmental delays and another 2 with severe behaviour problems. This is a MAINSTREAM class. Teachers are overwhelmed and we cannot juggle this many complex needs. I can't even get to look at my poor kids who are high achievers or my students who are ESL.
- Who do I complain to? They would say 'It's your job.'

If things aren't going well at school, who would you tell?

Students

- No one. At the time, I didn't tell anyone about my problems. I wasn't able to talk much, and bring myself to long speeches at the time. I couldn't tell anyone how staff were treating me. So, I didn't get any help.
- Mum / Dad / Family member, and Friend. I would immediately text my mum if I felt unsafe/overwhelmed, etc because I received no support from my teachers/management. The admin staff especially did not listen to what I had to say or what I needed.
- Mum / Dad / Family member, and Friend. My friends understand me and whilst I still struggle with communicating my feelings I like to feel like I can tell them my struggles.
- No one. My mother was very sick while I was in the school system, and my experiences with teachers made it clear to me that trying to tell people what was wrong made things worse. I did not want to be any more of a burden.
- No one. No one cared enough to do anything to help. They were too busy blaming me for not coping.

- Mum / Dad / Family member, and Therapist. When I am having an issue, my reaction is to go to someone I trust and as such my friends, family, therapist and trusted teachers are usually up to date with any problems.
- Mum / Dad / Family member, Teacher, Chaplain, Friend.
- Mum / Dad / Family member.

Do you know how to make a complaint about support for autistic students in schools? (other comments)

Parents / Carers

- All I know of is creating another meeting and asking the principal to sit in on our concerns.
- But after experiencing what it is like fighting the system to get help and supports for children in mainstream education, it is exhausting and too much and not worth the repercussions you face from the staff.
- But could find out- more children and families need to understand their rights and how to hold schools accountable. we need advocates for families who have additional risk such as low income, low literacy and low advocacy skills.
- But for others it's a maze to navigate.
- But I haven't looked either. I don't want to 'rock the boat'. I feel like I have to be grateful for what I do get in case I lose it. When asking for what my child is entitled to, I feel like I have to go gentle as really at times I'm educating the Principal. NAPLAN is a good example, I got told one thing by my principal, did my own research on the Dept of Education page and had to go back to him with proof. Then he rang up ASCARA and asked for extra accommodations for my child.
- But there is no point.
- But why they aren't interested in change, they support the schools and shame you as parents for doing so.
- Complaints are meaningless in a system where even negative findings by the Human Rights Commission are ignored by the Education Department and former minister.
- Does it really make a difference?
- Doesn't change anything.
- Human Rights Commission.
- I am following the complaint process, which has not helped my children at all.
- I do not know but I am sure I could find out if I wanted to. I am unsure if it would be useful though as I am not sure that the education department would be interested in assisting. They have a policy that they believe is working.
- I do now! We are currently writing a letter to the education minister with support from an independent advocate after all other attempts have been exhausted.
- I have complained to the Special Needs Coordinator at both the High School without the Autism Specialist Learning Program and to the SLP Coordinator at the school that did have the Program. In the former school, I took my complaint to the Deputy Principal and finally the Principal. On one occasion, I took the complaint to the ██████ Education Office. In the school with the specialist program, when the Special Needs Coordinator did not resolve my complaint, I appealed to the Principal. The Principal redirected me back to the Special Needs Coordinator. It was only when I made a direct complaint about this action that she replied directly to me and agreed to attend a meeting.
- I have made a complaint on one occasion. Brought in a disability advocate. Was so angry had great consultation then the Principal did what they wanted contrary to agreement. Really harmed my kids wellbeing and sense of value. We had meeting and because of 5 years of good relationship building we came back to it and worked it out. But was totally s**t while I and disability advocate was incredible in keeping the balance of power.
- I have sent a complaint to the AISWA and will be looking into other agencies to assist - but I don't know if that's the right process.

- I have used DDWA advocacy service.
- I lodged a complaint with the Human Rights Commission, hearing yet to be heard.
- I often liaise with the school (teacher, deputy and psych) so I would report any concerns to them.
- I went to the regional Coordinator with my complaints.
- I'd be going to my daughter's Head of Year in the first instance, then the staff member who last updated her IEP.
- If I complain then the staff will be more offside than they already now.
- It would be great to find out.
- Maybe. We worked with school leadership and education dept. Haven't made an official complaint but feel very let down.
- Only by complaining to the school.
- Other than the Principal, no.
- Our school offers no assistance.
- Previously when we have complained we have enlisted government MP's and Education Department Executives to make a complaint via email. This has been effective.
- Teacher, School Learning Support Coordinator.
- The government ignores the complaints.
- The one time I tried all we got was directed back to the school that were the problem.
- The school website does not list any contact for learning support at my sons school or anything at all in relation to autistic students. It should be more visible.
- There is no point.
- Tried through Education Dept and Minister... with virtually no action taken.
- Tried to, to the Independent Schools Association who advised we talk to our Principal....
- Unless to the deputy isn't the only option.
- We see the teacher first... if not happy then we take it to the deputy head... and if not happy then the principal... and that depends on the situation if it's class bullying or physical to being hurt or suspended from school for two days and then all of those steps plus I would book a appointment to see his child psych.
- Would contact teacher, principal, ask to get school psychologist involved who is non-biased.
- You can write letters to central office and ministers, you get a response, but no change. You need to be a very squeaky wheel and continue to fight for a long time for change.
- I have discussed my sons autism related needs in the past and been told that policy simply does not allow for my sons needs to be addressed, there is a gap in understanding of the correlation between social inclusion and integration within the school community and educational development for neurodiverse students that is not addressed by current policy

Therapists

- As a therapist the pathway on what we could report / complain about and how we would do it is unclear.
- Contact local government.
- Contact the Education Department's regional office for advice.
- Go to the school admin, parents, NDIS safeguards.
- I usually call Disability WA for support.
- Principal. Department of Education.
- Speak to my boss first.
- Speak to teacher. Escalate to Learning Coordinator. Contact Regional Education Office. Contact lead School Psychologist.
- The long delay in diagnosis means that many schools are having to deal with multiple very disordered children without funding for EAs. The whole process remains hinged on parental acceptance as well. While nobody would argue that diagnosis should occur

without parental consent, children are left in limbo and soak up time and support that should rightly go to children with a diagnosis. This is what makes it hard for schools to carry through with their IEPs, since the time must go elsewhere.

If you have made a complaint about support for an autistic student in WA schools, how well was your complaint managed? (other comments)

Parents / Carers

- As Principals are given carte blanche and able to ignore all recent data and research (particularly about the trauma and abusive nature of some standard departmental practices) there will continue to be significant issues for children with ASD accessing appropriate education and being supported to reach their full potential.
- But in the past it was not good and it was always my child's fault and I would always have a child in tears due to it being very one sided... my child wanted to leave the school and it got so bad that he kept saying I want to die. He got one of my kitchen knives at home and said that he was done... even I was bullied by parents... so I made the school accountable and said well why or how did it all start. If it was my son then that's on him but if it was other kids that started it and he is defending himself and when the truth comes out it wasn't my son it was the others and they have to be held accountable for their actions... and the school suspended the kid that lied to deputy head and principal and 4 teachers. I have supported my son but I teach him right from wrong and lying to adults or to anyone has consequences.
- But nothing happened.
- For one child it worked well, for the other it was practically ignored.
- Got nowhere with principal, central office and minister for education. It was after the principal changed that that particular principal listened and did something. Very emotional and draining period.
- Had to change schools. It was horrific and traumatising.
- Have not put in a complaint but have considered it.
- Haven't yet.
- I am in the process of starting this process.
- I can't comment as yet - because I have only just made it - but I am not expecting a great result - I am anticipating being fobbed off.
- I found it just went around in circles. Been at many different schools with 3 autistic kids, can depend on principle and who's coordinator I pulled my son out year 8 as coordinator was terrible and couldn't get to principle Next year a different coordinator was for his year level and a new principle came. I received an apology from both as my son was mistreated so badly by teachers and staff they worked hard to provide supports for him and teachers involved in the previous year were given warnings that they had to follow IEP. He is now at a different high school they have been amazing with communication staff all get along with him and don't put him down. as for my youngest I gave up advocating as was just too exhausting for me as we changed a few primary schools but as was with covid time and so many relief teachers and relief EAs communication was too poor and she is much higher needs but also masks so EAs say she had a great day yet she would be a mess the rest of the day at home and in total overwhelm and they expected her to ask for help no matter how many times me and her therapist said she is incapable of asking we spent two years of her therapy trying different ways to help her to ask . But part of her disability is she can't ask for help.
- I have not made a complaint. YET.
- I received a letter that did not take appropriate accountability.
- I was feeling extremely isolated and frustrated with the lack of support my son was receiving. I wasn't sure who I should be contacting. It took a couple of days and

escalating who I sent it to before I received a response. The meeting itself was actually very caring and supportive. It was clear the three staff members in our meeting cared a lot about our son and came up with a range of helpful solutions. But the system these teachers have to work within does NOT care or cater for students with autism.

- I witnessed a teacher drag a disabled 5yr old child out of the classroom by his arm (his feet weren't touching the ground) screaming at him that no one wanted him anywhere near them. I spoke to the Principal the following day, and was told to expect the cold shoulder from the staff. None of the staff ever spoke to me again. Our kids began screaming and crying each day on the way to school. We had to withdraw and move them to a different school. It was appalling.
- I would never do it again. It caused our family too much trauma.
- In the Non Autism Specialist Program High School, complaints received by the Head of Year and Social Needs Coordinator were often dismissed as trivial. The Deputy Principal wrote down the complaint. The Principal attended a meeting. The issues complained about remained. In the school with the Autism Specialist Learning Program the former Program Coordinator did not address any complaints in a straight-forward manner. Any replies side stepped the issues. The issues remained.
- It's all very well to make the complaint, but if nothing is done about constant bullying, and no safe place for a child to go in order to get away from it, then school is just a really bad place for an autistic child.
- It's just swept under the carpet there is zero change and zero accountability.
- Multiple bullying complaints and it was always "Your child accepted the apology and even comforted the crying child, so its all good" and then two days later said crying child was hip checking my child again.
- N/A
- N/A
- N/A
- N/A
- N/A
- N/A
- N/A
- N/A, I didn't know you could.
- Never acted upon by principal and district office - Only acted upon when sent to the Director of Education.
- No haven't.
- Not applicable.
- Not applicable.
- Only because I know how to fight and they know not to mess me around. Schools are savvy they know who can be pushed around and who can't. Human politics always at play.
- Poorly by the school.
- Principal has been of little help.
- Principal was supportive in the end but I shouldn't of had to escalate.
- School level, very poorly.
- Staff supportive and understanding, but have very little ideas on how school can be a good learning environment where autistic students feel connected.
- The regional office dealt with it, however very little change was made by the actual school.
- This was at a previous high school.
- We had a phone call to check that we were happy with our choice to homeschool, I said no it wasn't a choice and I am not happy that the education department cannot provide my children with suitable education. They did nothing further.

- We have had big issues recently and complained to the Education dept. The person involved was encouraged to retire but he'd done the same thing with kids with additional needs before. They need to make people accountable instead of trying to keep it all confidential. We have resubmitted our complaint as not satisfied.
- More funding 😊

School Staff

- A lot of the problems are when the child is not yet diagnosed.
- I have made complaints to management and nothing generally gets changed.
- [*Very poor*] In part due to the Principal not being totally honest in the process.
- It depends of how much of an inconvenience it is or how much it may cost.
- My school recognised I needed more support in the classroom and arranged for an EA to be available full times as well as an extra duty person to 'shadow' at break times.
- N/A
- N/A
- N/A
- Not Applicable.
- Not Applicable.
- Not made.
- Plenty of good will but just under-resourced.
- Previous to my involvement.
- Threatened with disciplinary action.
- Varies between schools, best make real effort - unfortunately many find it too hard.

Therapists

- Nothing was done in regard to blocking my visit to schools. I was told it was the Principal's decision.

Do you have other suggestions for improving support for autistic students in WA schools?

Students

- Easier access to services and information about what supports I can get at school. I don't know what may help me because I don't know what I can get at my school. I have a few teacher that are good that I can trust but I want to feel like more of them are the same.
- I think students should have safe spaces to go when having a sensory overload or meltdown other than the hallway, so they can have some privacy to do so. I also believe many teachers would benefit workshops to learn how to support their autistic students as many of mine want to help however are unable to or do not know how.
- More help, especially during recess / lunch.
- More mainstream EAs, a more present school nurse, social workers, and open dialogue so I know where I can find help.
- No fluorescent lights. Noise cancelling headphones. Quiet space to learn. Teachers stopping bullying instead of blaming me for being bullied. Things explained to me when I didn't understand. To feel safe. School is NOT safe for autistic people.
- To be able to wear wireless headphones as long as their not switched on and to have breaks from school work sometimes.

Parents / Carers

- A lot of change and re-education of teachers and education bureaucrats is needed.

- All school classes should be a maximum of 24 students in each class. That way kids get more time with teacher.
- All Schools should have an Autism Specialist Learning Program. All autistic students need a safe space before school and at break times. All students needs a proper space for them to access when they feel the need to leave the classroom. This should not be subject to authorisation by a third party. This room needs monitoring for safety reasons. A safe staffed Learning Space should be made available when a student cannot cope in the usual classroom environment. Last but not least all mention of suicide by students including those with Autism should be taken seriously, reported to parents immediately and the ██████ Education Office informed as a "critical incident ".
- All schools should implement and embrace Collaborative Proactive Solutions by Dr Ross Greene. This will allow schools to dig deep and actually find out what is going on for the child rather than just assuming, as they always get it wrong and don't understand what is actually going on for the autistic person then make up behaviour plans without knowing the real reason for the behaviour in the first place.
- An overhaul of the curriculum as its archaic. Neurodivergent children are intellectual and don't understand why they learn about things they don't need or won't use. Basic living skills are required more than algebra especially for kids with PDA. Relationship building and maintenance is required. More EA's that work well with neurodivergent kids as they are far and few between.
- As above.
- Autistic students are different. Their funding should be used solely on them, it's not their fault or problem the other kids haven't had a diagnosis or someone to advocate for them. The school should make sure it's used correctly. More EA time should be allocated to students as it shows one on one improves grades, attendance and education. Funding is a priority and using the funding correctly.
- Better communication between teachers and parents.
- Better funding for more staff hours.
- Better trained teacher Whole school approach for inclusion I think there should class discussions about autism and how the other children can support there friends.
- Better training, used funding for the actual student, stop prioritising physical visible disability over hidden disability.
- Burn it to the ground and start again... nah just jokes... sorta we need whole of country education policy reform, embedded on the principle that all children want to do well and will do well IF they can. Dr Ross Greene - Collaborative Proactive Solutions, Dr Mona Delahooke- Neuroception, Autistic and ND research.
- Change needs to start asap.
- Change the culture at the top. Educate the Principals about Autism and inclusive environments (sensory, educational and social). Educate the Teachers on the various supports for Autistics. Change the way EAs are used to support the student and provide more indepth training for the EAs. More funds to support Autistic students - EA time, training for the staff supporting the student, extra learning materials.
- Constant in services & learning about these special little people to understand how they function, process information, trying to self regulate, repetitive behaviours etc..... Unless you are living it, nobody else understands!!
- Create a space that actually supports our kids! One that understands our beautiful kids and what they are capable of if they are just seen and understood. Stop ticking boxes and start seeing people! Autistic people that are smart, funny, caring and capable of anything when set up for success. They wonder why our children are 50-75% more likely to battle anxiety and depression! This is why! Start realising that having 5-6 EAs a day ISNT building independence it's building anxiety and with out secure attachments (that neurotypical individuals can form with peers- which is a foundation for hierarchy of needs) our kids cannot learn! And the EAs might actually have the opportunity to build

report understanding and learn what works and doesn't for the kids to actually get the best out of the kids and give their best.

- Ensure staff and leadership in the school Are aware of their legal obligations, and provide a framework for accountability. Measures of compliance.
- Flexibility for at home learning on days where a school environment is too much for the child.
- For ASD kids a natural consequence is not always the answer more support is needed especially in high schools as this is the time when they can realise they are not like everyone else if the child suffers anxiety the struggle to get my child to school was a nightmare which then causes mental health issues & the feeling for them to belong. In a primary school there is more consistency more meeting the kids needs & all teachers get to know the child when a child feels safe & understood a child will thrive & do well mentally & physically.
- Further teacher education. And more access to an EA.
- Get rid of Applied behaviour analysis and all its other forms from mainstream schools, provide training to schools from AUTISTIC EDUCATORS. Follow the social model of disability rather than the medical one and work on fostering a positive self identity for the neurodivergent students for the benefit of their mental health.
- Have an autism specialist at the school that is aware of differences and PDA.
- I am disgusted that schools can not accept recommendations/diagnosis from psychologists and/or counsellors and aid parents to get help. I gave up on the school system for anything in regards to my neurodivergent children.
- I believe the education system has a long way to go with improving the support for Autistic students. But I think it's important that Autistic adults are consulted and involved in helping make positive changes.
- I feel like schools try fit all kids into the one box and the support that's given is to try help kids fit into this box. Instead I think there needs to be a more understanding approach where kids are supported in way that isn't about conforming to the approach that's wrong for them, but instead the school learning how to support these children in way thats going to give them the best learning out comes. I know my daughter would benefit from more hands on learning , or online game based learning , i feel like the way my daughter learns hasn't been tapped into yet and if it where she would come leaps and bounds. I feel my suggestions are dismissed because teachers and staff feel they know better than the family's there supporting.
- I honestly think we need to have schools specific for neuro divergent children. Not a blanket approach. My son is a highly functioning able student. He is able to learn, but not at a desk, not having someone speaking at him constantly. Show him a video or demonstrate the teaching and he's hooked. Smaller classrooms , shorter periods, calming classrooms, not posters, bright light plants buzzing lights and air sprays.
- I know schools are meant to accept students with specific needs. As a PP student [REDACTED] [REDACTED] said he couldn't attend the school even though I was living in the area. I purchased a home in the catchment area of school that would accept my child.
- I think talking to adult autistic educators and students about how they can be best supported would be a great way forward.
- I think that EA support should be 100% of the time, not the 60% that my boys were getting. I think that this would make a massive difference in retaining autistic children in schools.
- If teachers aren't sure of how to support the student, reach out to the parents and therapists for strategies. This should be done through yearly/6 monthly meetings. My son has been at his high school for 3 years and I had a phone call to discuss his needs for the first time this year. I think that it pretty poor. When I try to raise concerns with the school it is very difficult to get in touch with the right people.

- If you make the classroom environment, curriculum and teaching style neurodivergent-friendly, every single student in the classroom benefits. Remove the fluorescent lighting. Install air conditioning in all classrooms. Reduce class sizes. Use visual strategies and AAC devices (stop locking them in the damn cupboard) consistently, instead of expecting autistic students to 'learn how to cope without them' It's a disability! Allow neurodivergent students to study a modified curriculum. A student struggling to communicate in their native language will NOT benefit from being forced to learn LOTE, for example.
- Improve government funding to assist in teachers and leadership having the time to do the necessary education and training. Have more advertisement about autism and the challenges in the public, so the unconscious bias is reduced, and overall people can understand and be more inclusive.
- It is definitely a tricky fit...the schools are really designed for moving a whole lot of children through their education as efficiently as possible, yet our children need a very customised environment.
- It should be mandatory that ALL teaching and EA staff be trained in ADHD/ASD etc and know the limitations and challenges that mainstream learning has for our children. PD in empathy would be helpful too.
- It should be part of the curriculum to learn about disabilities, just as much as we learn about culture. Acceptance plays a big part and makes a lifelong difference to a child with a disability.
- It's great that autistic students can often be integrated into mainstream education and receive the support they need, it sets them up to integrate into wider society. It is also beneficial for neurotypical students to understand the needs of those with autism - both the positives and the challenges.
- Just thank you for looking into this - it means a lot - everything is a fight - just for our children to have an educational experience that suits their needs - education shouldn't just be for one type of person who fits the mould - it's such an outdated model - education and learning should be accessible to ALL !! So my suggestion on behalf of autistic children - would be to have someone available at each school who is trained and experienced in understanding the various needs of autistic children - who is available to support the teachers and teachers - just as a start - amongst many other things.
- Let's cover everything especially how they are feeling. How to cope with negativity. Boost their self esteem. Maybe address the differences through health education classes.
- Listen to autistic people. Work towards more neurodivergent affirming learning.
- Lower class sizes, full time aids in every class per diagnosed child.
- Make rules on where support funding is spent by school. They seem to be able to receive funding and spend it on furniture for the office or additional deputy and not on the special needs students. Make sure schools provide funding towards regular Professional learning for teachers and EAs. Change support funding to cater for the individual student needs, regardless if they have a diagnoses yet. Early intervention is so important but it can take years before a diagnoses. There seems to be a number of undiagnosed children in the early years and no support for child, class and teacher. Employ more school psychologists as waiting lists are too long.
- Make smaller classes, teach classes about autism and adhd.
- Make standard protocols / frameworks etc for dealing sensitively and adequately with neurodiverse needs that apply to all schools in WA. In this way, neurodiverse children won't be considered an "extra" bother to deal with (or not) but catered for in an equal and fair way compared to neurotypical children.
- Mandatory training for all school staff.
- Mandatory training for staff who deal with attendance issues or behaviour issues. These are the staff members most likely to have continued contact with an autistic child, especially before and during the diagnostic period.

- Many Have a look at some of the inclusive education theory and practice in Austria. I would like to see models moved away from diagnosis-based funding and have systems and processes for all kids in all schools who need it. Some children will continue to need specialist schools but if all schools both primary and high school were designed with kids with neurodivergence and mental health and trauma in mind then all our kids would perform better. Not to mention equipping the next generation with a far better understanding of neurodivergence and disability because they have friends with this, which isn't happening at the moment - it's sink or swim... Oh and put playgrounds and swings back into high schools because kids need to play even at teens and they are great for emotional and sensory regulation.
- "More EA time. More one on one EA time.
- We (parents) should be able to decide how funding is used in the school. Its unfair to dump all of the autistic students in one class and lump them with one EA to share. Autistic students don't learn by dumping them with others"
- More EAs in schools with autistic kids enrolled, EAs need to be trained in how to work with and safely manage Autistic children. Learning Support Coordinators need to be better trained in autistic children and willing to listen to the parents and therapists on what work best for their child.
- More education and staff. Easy.
- More education for parents of neurotypical students so they are aware of why some children have meltdowns at the end of the day due to burn out. Instead of just staring and passing judgement.
- More intervention needs to be given to families with children who display violent or challenging behaviours. The parents need to be supported and they need to feel like someone is on their side. Too much pressure is put on external advocacy providers who are struggling to maintain funding due to NDIS issues, education etc. the education department should be funding externalised supports purely for the parents/carers to attend meetings, or to manage the trauma that has been inflicted by the education system.
- More resource to schools and funding and easier access to diagnosed students. More EA Funding.
- More school psychs Some accountability/action/discipline for school staff that physically harm autistic children.
- More support staff. Teachers cannot teach all the kids and support 2-3 students on IEP's.
- More training and in-depth training and more Ed Support Centres or smaller classroom numbers in mainstream!
- More training for all staff and principals, by organisations that have autistic adults. Yellow lady bugs, spectrum space do a yearly symposium, online courses run by autistic adults. As we were once autistic children.
- More training for staff. Visiting autism experts. More funding for sensory plays pace and sensory regulation. Opportunities to learn in their areas of interest - adaptation to the curriculum to fit their passions ... Opportunities to show their talents and gifts !!!!
- More training for teachers and principles of mainstream schools, funding to roll out the program that ██████ Primary School offer to other schools in the South West Regions.
- More training for teachers and schools and more empathy and alternative models for students is needed.
- More training is absolutely needed for teachers to help and understand children with disabilities they lack the knowledge of understanding what they need to properly help them.
- More training, more flexible supports, less red tape and bureaucracy, less stigma.
- My Son's school advises that SSEN-D is providing support but i don't know how this is working. If SSEN-D staff were trained to meet the parents of students needing support this would enable me to better understand how they are assisting my child's education.

- No.
- No main stream schools will accept my child she's not the right fit for them so she suffers by being home no interaction I feel like taking education department to court she has a right to an education more special education support school are needed.
- No suggestions presently.
- Please collaborate with people who have autism to find out what feels like a safe and engaging environment for them.
- Please give help to school administrators to know what they must provide.
- Please remove Positive Behaviour Support as a method in schools. There are more up to date methods that work and that are not harmful to our children. Please listen to their caregivers of these children. Please listen to the voices of Autistic adults that have been through the school system. Change is imperative!!!
- Provide more funding for schools to implement learning areas, emotional regulation areas and staff who are trained.
- Providing newly diagnosed with information regarding the process of IEP's and what is available to diagnosed students.
- Providing schools with more funding so they can have smaller class sizes, more EA's, more teacher support (especially regarding training and emotional support after a stressful incident), more resources for emotional wellbeing of students, less exclusion, more training of children on the effects of bullying, what bullying looks like (including covert bullying) and how to support one another in the classroom or playground setting.
- providing support and awareness to staff and students...there is still a lot of stigma attached to ASD and misconception.
- Reduce class sizes. Accept diversity. Encourage inclusion. Change the thinking & dialogue ... "embrace neurodiversity" (stop trying to make neurodiverse people fit mainstream ... they think differently and this should be valued).
- Regional and remote areas have little to no support. We had to leave marble Bar and move to Perth so our child could get supports. SLP programs are vital, I honestly believe our child would not be handling highschool if it wasn't for him being in one. These programs are massively underfunded and fill quickly.
- Regional students - don't forget us.
- Schools could benefit from working with organisations that live and breathe autism. South West schools should be seeking out SWAN to see what they can do differently. Thank you SWAN for everything you do.
- Schools need more EA staff trained in autism to help cater to the learning of a autistic child.
- Schools need to be able to show how and what they're doing to support ASD children.
- Schools should be held accountable for the outcomes of autistic students and students with disabilities. They shouldn't get funding for students with disabilities if they aren't following the law (the DSE 2005). Parents should be able to see what the school disability funding is being used for, and this should be really clear and public-facing on a register or on the school website. Parents should also be able to see how effective the strategies and funding use is - so things like what percentage of students at the school have a recorded disability, what percentage of students get suspended at the school compared to what percentage of students with disabilities get suspended at the school, what percentage of students leave the school to be homeschooled each year compared to what percentage of students with disabilities get suspended each year, what percentage of students lose their good standing each year compared to what percentage of students with disabilities lose their good standing each year. And the same statistics comparing other disadvantaged groups of students like Aboriginal students, CALD students, non-binary students.
- Scrap the current system, stop expecting ASD/PDA to just fit into mainstream with a few adjustments or into ED Support with students with severe physical and intellectual

disabilities and expect they will learn social skills and be the same as the other students. Re write the whole program for these kids incorporate people outside DOE who know how to work with ND students

- Sensory rooms in all schools. That are codesigned. Quiet places. Flexible learning g models that don't penalise non-attendance. Educate the educators all of them. Bring the aging teachers into contemporary practises. Ignorance is no excuse. Invite kids to the table. All kids and see what ideas they come up with. Celebrate disability. It isn't a dirty word. Create places for acknowledging unique ways of being in life.
- Sessions with other ASD/Sensory children.
- Smaller classrooms, consistency of teaching and EA staff throughout the school year.
- So much more education is needed generally on neurodiversity - starting with teachers, but also students and families in the school community.
- Staff should be asking the parents of students for ideas, every child is different and we unethical challenging it can be for staff. However not asking or including parents ideas and opinions will only complicate matters.
- Support at school and dealing with bullying would stop the abuse I get at home. My house gets Smashed up I get attacked because the school won't deal with issues so my daughter brings them home.
- Support, support, support. For both kids and teachers. Can't expect teachers to do more without more support and resources. Look at the BIG PICTURE schools and use them as the standard other schools need to get to.
- Teacher and staff training.
- Teacher training. Training of the entire department A shift in the style of learning.
- Teaching the kids about neurodivergence so they can understand and support their peers and so they aren't scared of the difference.
- Thank you for asking. I will hand over now to the people in power to put their hearts and souls into finding fair and lasting solutions so that Australian students with autism are able to access the education that is rightfully theirs.
- The main problems I have faced are - I provide training to staff for nothing and give resources, all of which are underutilised, lost and every year the retraining of staff keep my child back further. Age appropriate doesn't work in his case... playgrounds, play-based learning and teaching the other children about compassion is what works. All ideas have been discussed and some tried but the gap in peers interests in upper primary are not celebrated for my boy.
- There is still a huge amount that can be done to improve outcomes. There seems to be a huge difference in the approaches of the various schools, and it should be more consistent.
- There needs to be more schools for these kids, the bullying in the main stream is horrendous, the fighting is out of control.
- They need more knowledge of our kids who have learning disabilities.
- They need to have qualified professionals (like a social worker) who is trained specifically in ASD to develop and implement IEP.
- This survey is a great start.
- Training and working collaboratively with families and professionals.
- Training for teachers in. Special Needs. Social worker and OT support in schools. More Psychology hours. Better yet social worker psychologist and OT in SLP. No ABA detrimental and is not a teaching tool. It is an occupational therapy tool and one with poor peer review.
- Training that is based on neuro-affirming, collaborative and responsive learning like Dr Ross Greene.
- Training training training training. It needs to be a continual process of learning embedded into the system. The creation of learning programs for teachers and kids like the interception one in SA is a great example of something that can be done for teachers

and kids, without isolating autistic kids, and can be understood easily and replicated in multiple locations. But it's got to be part of the curriculum to make every teacher do it.

- Treat them like they are people, not a problem to be swept under the rug.
- Unsure.
- We need to build more awareness and understanding.
- Yes! Engage with the experts like CARG (Curtin Autistic Research Group) to develop programs, training and resources for autistic students.

School Staff

- Accountability for the actions of staff, starting with better monitoring.
- Better allocation of funding of students according to Occupational functional needs assessment, restrict funding to private school system and prioritise public system students. And refrain from pooling EA funds to support multiple students (without diagnoses) if possible.
- Department of Education should review Independent schools more closely for this specific area, and how funding from Disability Resourcing is spent should be mandated to benefit the student.
- Diagnosis or imputed support immediately in private schools. Currently we have to wait till the following year with NCCD money.
- Easier accessibility and financial support to begin the assessment and diagnosis process. It's incredibly overwhelming and expensive, it's hard to find paediatricians , and all the other hoops to jump through for a diagnosis. Parents need more support and pathway guidance to get the ball rolling on an assessment for their children. We have way too many children who are not, but probably should be diagnosed so they have access to support. More funding for EA time and building resources.
- Education, more funding. There are at least 8 high needs students in yr 2 and below that need a full time EA but have no diagnosis and funding.
- Figure out a way to shorten the diagnosis wait times.
- Funding improvements.
- Funding to cater for their needs.
- Funding!!!!!!!!!!!!
- Just allocate more EA time to support them.
- Mandatory education at university for teachers and EAs as well as School leaders.
- Mandatory Special Needs training.
- More Education Assistant time and support, PD for high behavioural needs, release time for teachers to meet with therapists. More therapists to cover the increasing numbers of Autistic children.
- More funding and support staff to help the students.
- More funding for supporting students.
- More funding is required for specific training and support for teachers and for Assistants.
- More involvement with the child's family and support groups.
- More parent engagement. One of the biggest barriers to support is parent apathy/ denial. So much time and energy is wasted by parent / carers failing to follow through or even engage with the school.
- More specialised centres for students with Autism and a transparent enrolment process. Resourcing for students based on need not diagnosis.
- More trained therapists. More Autism units at university level for all students.
- Need of specialised schools to help , better services and support offered to schools and more funding and or one education assistant solely for the autistic child in every class.
- Please train all staff about neurodiverse brains, what can be expected and how you can support them to achieve their full potential. Please also teach staff that neurodiverse brains are not a disability. Some of them are highly intelligent. Please provide more

funding for additional support. Teachers are struggling with the numbers of pupils and it's the children who suffer.

- Provide support to teachers. Offer in school training Implement a different curriculum, better than the ABLEWA curriculum.
- Requirement for all schools to differentiate.
- Resources, resources, resources. In the form of time for teachers, support staff to work with autistic students and help in writing and implementing IEPs.
- Review staff suitability for running ASD/Learning support programs and enforce greater accountability.
- Smaller class sizes. Limits of how many special needs children you can have per class/per school. Getting children diagnosed faster- we are in desperate need for paed appointments!!
- Support needs to be far more accessible and equitable.
- The allocation of funds for support (EA) need to be reviewed. Students with ASD require support at any given moment and without an EA available to give this support, learning is taken away from the whole class.
- This is a very difficult area. To attempt to meet the needs of ASD kids AND ensure all staff and other students are having their needs met is a tricky balancing act.
- Training for all principals and deputies. If they don't value and understand disability, inclusively and differentiation then class teachers are way less likely to be well supported.
- We have had a great personal development day where Autism was one of the disorders discussed by a school psychologist that was a brilliant way to get the information out to a large number of people.

Therapists

- Establishing a minimum standard of care that is monitored (including reviews of actual IEPs and how they are implemented) would be a wonderful step forward. Advising parents of the minimum support they can expect, what an IEP is and opening the door for clear questions outside of the school itself would assist in clarity and understanding. Funding schools appropriately to ensure staffing and training are at a minimum standard is required.
- Mandatory Education and Professional Development. More easy to access resources and everyone working together to support the individual for the best quality of life!
- More education for staff, more time for staff to plan supports for autistic kids and teens, more liaison with external services when families request it.